

# 78 Quarterly

Volume 1, Number 5



Real Letters  
Paramount—Part 3  
100 Years From Today  
Gennett/Champion Blues  
6 Who Made Recorded History  
Portrait Of a Blues Singer  
When the Wolf Knocked  
On Victor's Door  
"Louis Blue"  
Rarest 78s

**\$6.95**

What made Paramounts sound so bad—but sell so well? What happened to black music 100 years ago? What 1932 Victor blues 78s sold less than 100 copies? What are the rarest blues and jazz 78s?—don't you wish you had them?



# 78 QUARTERLY



COVER PHOTO (1902) FROM THE COLLECTION OF FRED RAMSEY, JR.

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# 78 QUARTERLY

VOLUME ONE, NO. 5

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## REAL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I recently received Issue Number 4 of *78 Quarterly* in the mail. Let me take this opportunity to tell you how much I enjoy reading all the informative articles about elusive recordings and the musicians who recorded them. I especially appreciate the Rarest 78s series you are running. The only thing that detracts from my complete enjoyment is the poor quality of the photographs. Naturally, I don't expect photos of Buddy Bolden (p. 6) to be perfect, but I think there is no excuse for the execrable photo of Fred Ramsey taken only last year (see p. 31).

*78 Quarterly* is a premium magazine with a premium price, so I think better photos would make it a truly first-rate publication (you may consider using glossy paper to improve photo quality). Sincerely,

Philip Fukuda  
Berkeley, California

There are a couple of errors, one major one, that I must draw your attention to:

Page 45: Photo credit should have read: photo courtesy Steve LaVere (you misspelled LaVere with a small

"v") or something to that effect. The photo was taken by Dave Darnell and is clearly stated so on the back of the photo.

Page 46: Same error as above, except that the name is spelled correctly.

Page 52: The "dime-store" photo is available as a *post-card*, not a poster. My letter of November 18, 1988 is very clear about this.

Page 51: The error from page 52 is compounded here. Further, you have made no mention of the shipping and handling charges as set forth in my letter to you of November 30, 1989. The net result may be alright in one respect, though: when a reader sends in \$10 for the two posters, he'll receive a poster and a postcard and change. The only problem being that he will have expected two posters!

Page 83: You failed to credit me (as well as Alice) for the photo of Glen.

Well, those are my carps. Other than that, the issue looks fabulous, and I can't wait to get into the article. Thanks for everything,

Steve LaVere  
Los Angeles, California

Dear Quarterly,

Thank you for clearing up certain Robert Johnson lyrics in *The Idioms of Robert Johnson* article. However, I would like to clear your confusion on the lyrics of *Milkcow Blues*:

Tell me milk cow, what on earth is wrong with you?

You have lemon in your cream, and

Your milk is turning blue.

Now your calf is hungry, I believe

He needs a suck,

But your milk is turning blue,

I believe he's out of luck.

I feel like milking and my cow

Won't come,

I feel like churning and my milk

Won't turn.

I'm crying please, please

Don't do me wrong.

If you see my milk cow, Baby

Now, please drive her home.

My milk cow's been ramblin'

for miles around.

Well now, I can't settle for

Another man's milk cow,  
In the same man's town.

Thank you,  
Bryan Arthur  
Newport, North Carolina



From this letter's heading you may conclude that I'm in jazz literature, just as you are. I've been doing this about as long as *78 Quarterly* did not appear...But we did...with ups and down. Since early last year, Max Vreede is our final editor, which created some more stability, a real "up," Max told me that Issue 4 of your magazine is out now, and that's why I write.

Issue 3 I received after sending a 50 Dutch guilder bill, which at the time paid two copies, air-mailed. I got my first copy after six weeks and, after a reminder from my side, my second copy a month or so later. Here's another 50 Dutch guilder bill. It still pays two copies of Issue 4, air-mailed, I believe. If not, please send both surface mail and apply unused money to the payment of Issue 5, whenever that comes out.

You may be interested to read an opinion about *78Q* from a person who had written about early jazz for about 25 years. If you're not, then you may skip the rest of this paragraph. I will keep buying *78Q* anyhow. I think that:

- American collectors are in a superb position to get the facts of jazz & blues history (and the 78s!).

- Only in the last 20 years or so, some real, high-quality jazz literature has emerged from the USA, most earlier material being of amateurish level. There are important exceptions to this rule, but jazz and its history was not considered high class in the past.

- *78Q* has access to some of the greatest collections of records and documents in the world. This is your strength.

- Why does *78Q* then devote so much space to low-quality reproduction of photographs? (Please don't tell me this is artistic.) To inside humor? To fictional material that can only be of marginal interest to many readers? (Very good jazz fiction does exist, why not give a list?)





I hope you do not get me wrong. I hope to make a positive contribution with my remarks. Looking forward to my two copies of Issue 4. Many thanks.

Ate Van Delden  
Doctor Jazz Magazine  
Geldrop, Netherlands



In spite of many cards, 78 *Quarterly* 4 never reached me. I had paid for 3 and 4, duly received No. 3, but was never successful on No. 4. Finally, Roger Misiewicz managed to secure me a copy. I hope No. 5 will receive me through the proper channels as I cannot afford to go without it.

Some remarks on the Bob Hilbert article on the Paramount caché:

1. I take it that L151-1/-2 are mistakes for L152-1/-2 (Buck MacFarland).

2. L511 male white voc/vn/g/p: Billy Russell and Buddies Hour Trio, Vocal with Trio acc., L510-1 Don't Tell Her (What's Happened To Me) Broadway 1405; L511-2 Just To Be With You (One Hour Tonight).

3. Hilbert's article does not make clear the role George Paulus is supposed to have played in the Pm deal.

Many compliments on 78 *Quarterly*, which always was and still is: the finest blues mag. Best wishes,

Guido van Rijn  
Haarlem, The Netherlands



(Stephen) Calt stated in his article that Black Swan released 90 records. I don't know from where he has this number. However, the correct number is closer to 200 than 100 (I have more than 100 Black Swans myself). Moreover, he says that Paramount produced and pressed Black Swan's records. This may be true for the first year—to the best of my knowledge no one has established this as a fact—but, in 1922, Pace & Fletcher bought Olympic Disc Record Corporation and used it for producing and pressing Black Swan, Olympic (Fletcher Record Company), Majestic, LaBelle, Melody, and

MacLevin. Well, that's all. Sincerely,  
Helge Thygesen  
Svendborg, Denmark



Dear Ma'am or Sirs,

Hello! My name is Nathan J. Wright, I am the Publisher of *THE PURPLE UNDERGROUND*, a monthly newsletter about Prince. I am writing to you in regards to your ad in *Rolling Stone's* issue #588. I would be interested in any information on Robert Johnson. Did you know that pop star Prince is planning to portray Robert Johnson in a movie titled *THE ROBERT JOHNSON STORY*? Enclosed is a self-addressed stamped envelope. Please send information. Best wishes. Sincerely,

Nathan J. Wright, Publisher  
*THE PURPLE UNDERGROUND*  
Auburn Hills, MI 48057



I've got a few questions about 78 *Quarterly* that you might be able to answer. First, let me say that I am a subscriber. I sent you my personal check #2782 in the amount of \$32.00 on July 26, 1989.

On November 7, 1989, I received my Volume One, No. 4 issue. Granted, the only date on the magazine is "1989." So, I guess you're safe if it arrives anytime before New Year's Day, 1990! I could understand having a bad string of luck with getting the edition out. This happens with great regularity with small publications; however, I don't think that this was the case in this instance. A friend and fellow collector here in town (yes, he too, is also a 78 *Quarterly* subscriber with a late-arriving issue) had visited Tom Tsotsi in early August and saw this same issue at his home.

My question, then, is the magazine's policy going to be timely delivery to the "in-crowd", and whenever we get to it for us "amateurs" out here in the hinterlands?

Now, regarding "78 Presents the Rarest 78s (C-D)"—This is an interesting "game" that's been going on since Issue #1. I remember looking at that first listing, my mouth watering and wondering just how

you arrived at these quantity statistics. I remember seeing a record listed that I am lucky enough to have a copy in my collection, and finding out that there was only "one known copy," and of course, they weren't referring to my copy.

And in the newest issue, again, I'm lucky enough to have just two of these rarities; but, again, mine aren't listed in the count.

When you get right down to it, isn't this column just an exercise in backslapping among the "important" record collectors? I'll have to say that it certainly makes for interesting reading. I've read about records that I didn't even know existed.

I guess the part I find objectionable is the "exclusive club" nature of divining just how many copies are in existence. Although, I do see you're widening your panel of jurors—36 by my count. But, then, wouldn't you guess that there's at least 10,000 78 record collectors world-wide? I'm certainly not sure of that figure; but on the other hand, I can add two copies of Charlie Davis' *The Drag* to your list from right here in Springfield.

Hey, what the hell, don't you think a fairer way of discerning quantities of rarities would be a survey of your subscribers? Surely, there are more chances of finding a "more relevant" count this way. I know it would be an expense, and it certainly would not be exact (what would?).

I know Ken Crawford, Bob Hilbert, Bob Fertig, and many of your other jurors. They're great guys with fabulous record collections. I'm afraid your "Country Club" record contest has a tendency to alienate a lot of us "amateurs."

Other than the above, I'm really impressed with quality and content of the magazine. Keep up the good work.

Paul A. Riseman  
Springfield, Illinois



To Whom It May Concern:

This past 10 August, 1989, I sent off a check to you folks for \$9.15 (\$6.95, plus \$2.20 postage and handling) to order my copy of 78 *Quarterly* (Vol. 1, No. 4) featuring Robert

Johnson (I had seen the ad in *Living Blues* #86). Now, almost three months later, I receive in the mail today from you folks what amounts to an order form—telling me that I had better order my copy of the 78 *Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 4 real soon, as you were expecting them to sell faster than hot tamales.

As you might expect, I am furious. It is interesting to me that you seemed to have the time to cash my check, but have not had time to go to the post office to mail the issue. As things stand now, I have paid \$6.95 for the single sheet of paper the order form was printed on, and an unbelievable \$2.20 for a first-class 25-cent U.S. Postage Stamp you used to mail it to me.

Gentlemen, may I humbly suggest you immediately—and I do mean IMMEDIATELY—mail me the 78 *Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 4 before I become irate. It certainly has been a liberal education. Underwhelmed,  
(name withheld)



November 20, 1989

Gentlemen:

This office has been contacted by the person named (below) concerning an unsettled mail order transaction with you. Attached is their correspondence to us which relates the details of the circumstances.

Please examine your records and take appropriate action to resolve this matter. I would appreciate your doing so within the next 30 days.

Thank you for your cooperation. Sincerely,

Marvel B. Hamadeh  
Supervisor, Customer Relations,  
Office Of the Regional Chief Inspector,  
U.S. Postal Service, Memphis, TN

DATE: November 1, 1989  
OUR REF: SND09: ERHART: el: 9998

SUBJECT: Suspected Fraud  
TO: Regional Chief Postal Inspector

Attn: MOSC  
Southern Region  
1407 Union Avenue, 10th Floor  
Memphis, TN 38161-0001

The enclosed correspondence was submitted to this office and forwarded for your attention. The customer has been unable to communicate with the company and suspects this is a scam.

E.R. HART  
Postmaster  
United States Post Office  
Key West, FL 33040-9998

October 22, 1989  
Chief of Police, Key West, FL 33040  
Dear Sir,

I am addressing this to you in the hope that you can help me out! I don't know if you have a Chamber of Commerce, or a Better Business Bureau, or who should look into this.

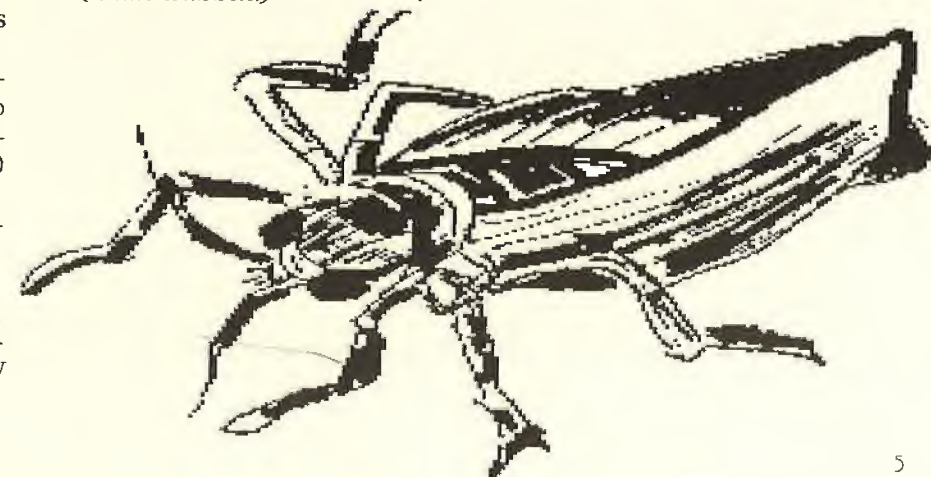
I have evidently been taken!

On August 2, 1989, I sent a check for \$32.00 in answer to an advertisement (copy enclosed) for a "Now Available" publication! My check (copy enclosed) was cashed on August 8, 1989.

Not having received the magazine, I wrote inquiring on September 19, 1989—and received no answer!

This is an obvious case of fraud! Can anything be done about it—or am I just out \$32.00?

I would most sincerely appreciate anything that you could do to be of help to me! Sincerely,  
(name withheld)



(Editor's Note: Our sincere apologies to those of you who suffered through the anxious months of August to November, 1989—nervously, then angrily awaiting Issue No. 4. We were away those autumn months and had put the magazine in the automated hands of a professional mailing service. Some of you got no magazine, and others got two copies. This obse error has been corrected.)

Apologies are also due to Mr. Tsuneo Nishijima for our inadvertant photocopy of his list in our article in No. 4, "Back In Nagasaki With Lucky." The material had originally appeared in the Japanese *Record Collectors' Magazine*—Vol. 2, No. 3 in September, 1983. We are informed that Mr. Nishijima had completed this Lucky Records list after many years of research.



THE  
CLOSING  
IS  
SEPTEMBER 1,  
1990!



## AUCTIONS & TRADES

HOWARD BERG, Box 336, Hatfield, PA 19440. FIRST 13 ITEMS TRADE ONLY FOR SIMILAR MAT'L.

1. AM 124—Mobile Strugglers—Fattenin' Frogs/Memphis Bls E+
2. Ch 15118—Fess Wms/Duke—Ya Gotta Know How/Animal Crackers E-
3. OK 45552—Three Stripped Gears—Black Bottom Str./1931 Depression Bls V+ 1" scr. tick "B"
4. Pm 12457—John Wms Synco. Jazzers—Goose Grease/Down In Gallion E E- rc's-ogr.
5. Pm 12668—Ma Rainey's Tub Jug—Prove It On Me/Hear Me Talking E-
6. Vo 1236—Jimmy Wade—Miss. Wobble/Gates Bls. E prs. mrks. NAP
7. Vo 1594—Harry Dial—Poison/When My Baby E E+ 1/2" the "B" NAP
8. Vo 1737—Jim Miller—Joker Man Bls/Next Door Man W—plays strong
9. Vo 5375—Smiths Garage Fiddle Bnd—Tom & Jerry/Gray Eagle E E+
10. Vo 5384—Luke Highnight/(No Interest)—Sailing On The Ocean E+
11. Vo 5426—Milner & Curtis—Evening Shade Waltz/N.E. Breakdown E-
12. Bwy 9004—Virgie Lee (Ga. White)—Your Worries etc./You Done Lost (sup. unis. De)V-/E lite ndle brns o'all
13. Vo 03120—Leroy Carter—Can't Anybody Tell Me Bls/Black Widow E/E-
14. Per 5-12-57—Bull City Red—Richmond Bls/Now I'm Talking About You V+ 1/2" the "B" NAP
15. Vo 15511—Harry Richman—Blue Skies/Mine V+
16. Vo 02743—Tex. Alexander—Bls In My Mind/Mistreatin' Woman E E+
17. Vo 03444—Peetie Wheatstraw—Cut Out Bls/Last Dime Bls E E-
18. Or 6-11-65—Miss. Jook Band—Sippy Whippy/Hittin The Bottle W. plays strong

GEORGE PAULUS, 5148 Benton, Downers Grove, IL 60515. OFFERED FOR SALE OR TRADE. Prefer trades of heavy country blues—Patton, House, James, JD Short, Geeshie Wiley, H.H. Brown, and many similar artists.

1. James Stump Johnson—QRS 7050 N-
2. Bo Carter—OK 8887 N-
3. Cripple Clarence Lofton Vo 2951 E-/V++
4. Cripple Clarence Lofton—ME 61166 E
5. Blind Willie McTell—BB 5362 V++
6. Furry Lewis—VI 38519 E-
7. Furry Lewis—VI 21664 N-
8. King Brady—GE 6393 V+/E-
9. Holy Ghost Sanc. Singers—BR 7162 E-
10. Freddie Keppard (take 1)—PM 12399 E-
11. Sammy Stewart—PUR 11359 E-
12. Jimmy Blythe—PM 12428 N-/E+ Sm. HC, NAP
13. Jimmie Blythe—PM 12370 V+
14. K.C. Frank Melrose—BR 7062 V++
15. Cook's Dreamland Orch.—GE 5374 V++
16. Chas. Creath—OK 8210 E-/V+
17. Kentucky Jazz Babies—VI 38616 V++
18. Junie Cobb—PM 12383 V
19. Harmaniac 5—BWY 1034 E/E+
20. Famous Hokum Boys—Ro 5067 E+
21. Barefoot Bill—Co 14481 V
22. Big Joe Williams BB 7065 N-
23. Sam Collins—PE 193 V
24. Kaiser Clifton—VI 38600 V++
25. Washboard Serenaders—VI 38610 E/E-

GAYLE DEAN WARDLOW, 1426 52nd Avenue, Meridian, MS 39305. FOR TRADE ONLY.

1. Herwin 92001—Alberta Jones Acc. By The Ellington Twins—Lucky Number Bls/I'm Gonna Put—V+
2. Paramount 12924—Charlie Patton—Rattlesnake Bls/Runnin' Wild—both sides are V+ (looks E-)
3. Champion 50031—Skip James—If You Haven't Any Hay/22-20 Bls—V+/V
4. Oriole 8084—Joe Evans/Arthur McClain—Early Some Morning Bls/Cream & Sugar Bls—both sides V+
5. Paramount 13076—Charlie McFadden—Groceries On The Shelf No. 2/Yellow Woman Bls—N-

KIP LORNELL, 19 9th Street, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003-1333. WANT LIST—all in only G condition, or less.

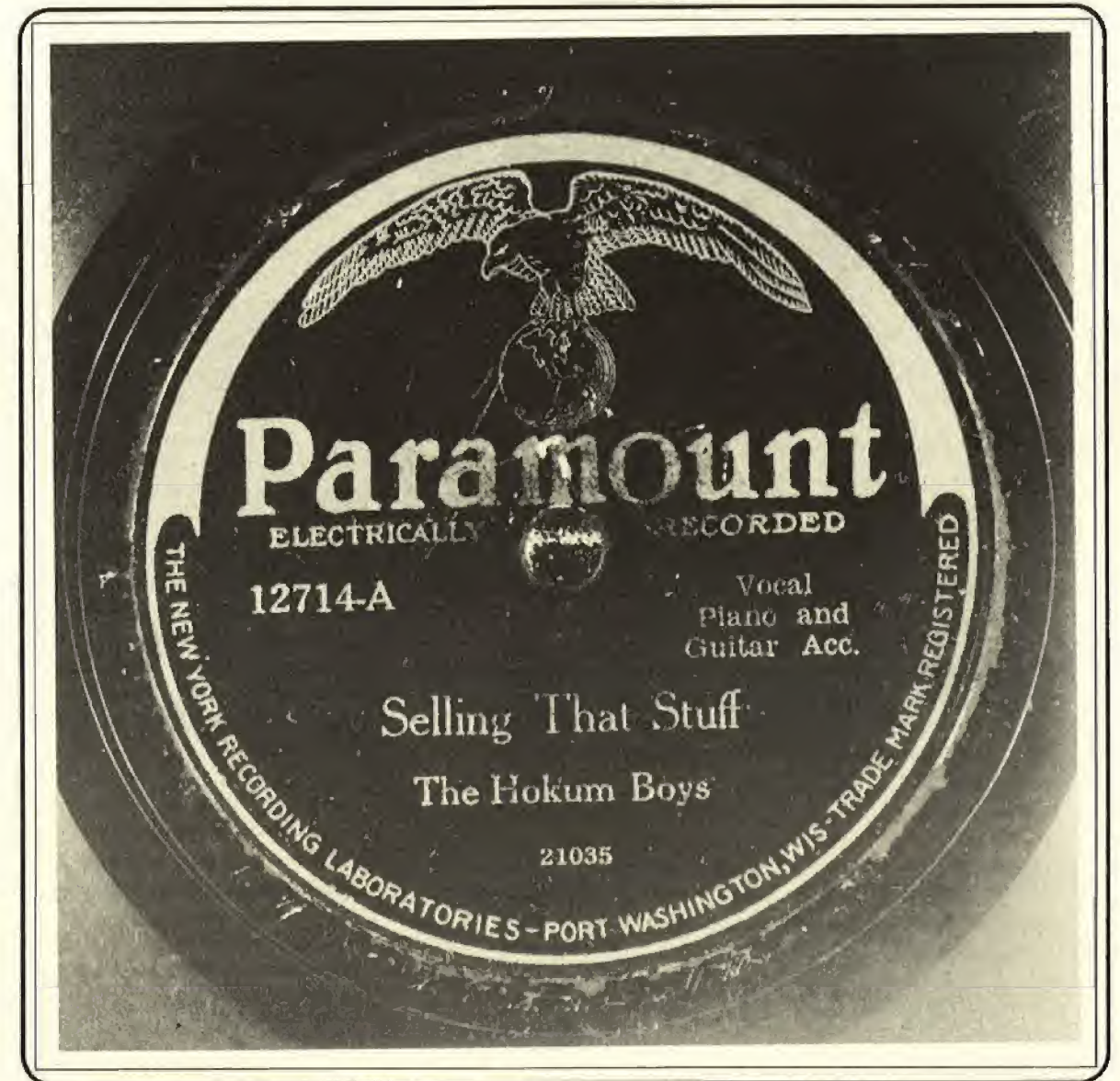
1. Blind Blake—Fightin' The Jug—Paramount 12863
2. Slim Duckett & P. Norwood—When The Saints Go Marching In—Okeh 8899
3. Tommy Johnson—Big Road—Victor 21279
4. Tommy Johnson—Canned Heat—

Victor 38535

5. Memphis Minnie/(Pinetop)—Hustlin Woman Bls—Bluebird 6202
6. Tampa Red—Boogie Woogie Dance/Bumble Bee Bls—Vocalion 1619
7. Ramblin' Thomas—Jig Head Bls—Paramount 12708
8. King David's Jug Band—Rising Sun Bls—Okeh 8913

PETE WHELAN, 626 Canfield Lane, Key West, FL 33040. TRADE ONLY (Wanted: Blues on Paramount 12900 & up, Jazz & Blues on Gennett-family labels. Odd wants: Mr. & Mrs. Happy Lawson on E. Gnt., G.C. Osborne on "Bonner" label.)

1. Bessie Johnson's Sanctified Singers—OK 8765 E-
  2. Walter & Byrd/(Rev. Dickenson)—Pm 12945 V+
  3. Laura Henton—Co 14388 E+
  4. Georgia Pine Boy—Ch 50009 E
  5. Sammy Brown—Gnt 6337 V
  6. Barefoot Bill—Co 14526 E-
  7. Papa Charlie Jackson & Bl. Blake—Pm 12911 G (good, rare)
  8. Famous Hokum Boys—Or 8013 V+
  9. Johnny Bayersdorffer—OK 40133 V
  10. Dallas String Band—Co 14410 V to V+
  11. The Wolverines—Vo 15766 E+
  12. Wolverine Orch.—Gnt 5620 V+
  13. Five Musical Blackbirds (Thomas Morris) Per 14585 E-
  14. Bessie Smith—Young Woman's Bls (3-A-B-20)/Baby Doll (2-2)—Columbia test (blue wax) E- to E
  15. Fred Gardner—OK 41440 V+
  16. Duke Williams & His Orch.—Vo 15892 V/V+
  17. Sweat Peas—Vic 38565 V to V+
  18. Buddy Moss—Per 6-04-56 E to E+
  19. California Ramblers—Edison 14064 (electric) E
  20. Buck MacFarland—Pm 12971 G+ (dig on "On Your Way").
  21. Lizzie Miles (Morton)—Vic 38571 V+
  22. Traymore Orch (Ellington)—Vo 15555 V+
  23. Cannon's Jug Stompers—Vic 23262 V to V+ (flake 3/16" on ring it" side)
  24. Elder Curry—Memphis Flu—OK 8857 V to V+
  25. Walter Davis—BB 8961 V+ (great piano solos)
  26. Wally Erickson's Colliseum Orch.—Gnt 3068 E-
  27. Buddy Golden & His Wolverines—Follow Thru 1011 V+
  28. Slim Johnson—Mama, I Don't Need You Now/You'll Come Back To Me—Gnt 6698 V+
  29. Bob Miller—The Ohio Prison Fire/Poker Alice—Gnt 7201 E to E+
  30. King Nawahi Hawaiians—Vic 23538 V+
  31. King Hawahii's Hawaiians—Co 2173 N-
- and many others for trade.



# THE BUYING AND SELLING OF PARAMOUNTS

from the collection of SHERMAN TOLEN

(PART 3)

by  
STEPHEN CALT  
AND GAYLE DEAN WARDLOW





clay with shellac (the most expensive record ingredient, obtained from Boston and New York jobbers) and other filler material used to give the record toughness and color. (Standard filler ingredients of the era were rotten stone and cotton flock, with mineral black or lamp-black added as coloring agents.) The mixed formula, known as a "batch", was taken to the basement of the plant, which was called the "roller room". There it was softened by steam heat; once pliable, it was known as "dough". After the dough was grooved with a knife and mechanically rolled into a sheet of the desired shape and thickness, it was known as record "stock".

After being cooled by a water table, piles of stock were taken upstairs to the pressing room, which occupied the first floor of the factory, where employees ordinarily worked in suffocating 80 or 85 degree heat, thanks to the steam generated by the pressing process. In the summer, the room temperature rose by 20 or 25 degrees.

Although automatic record pressing had been instituted within the record industry in the early 1920s, Paramounts were pressed by hand-operated dies until 1926 or 1927. Upon automating its pressing process, the company employed 40- or 55-foot high cast-iron presses designed by Walter Klopp. A sheet of stock was placed in the open press, which had been previously heated by means of a steam table. After a record label was adhered to it by hand,<sup>4</sup> the press was closed and locked. Within each press were two metal "shells", representing the sides of a record; these had been prepared by duplicating a "mother" that was in turn a replica of a "master" prepared by coating the wax disc on which the music had originally been recorded with copper.<sup>5</sup>

From the imprint of the shell upon the record stock within the closed press, the record would emerge. After the record was pressed, cold water would be run through the press die in order to cool the newly-minted record. Then the press would be opened, and the process would begin anew.

According to Mayo Williams, the successful Paramount "race" record sold in the tens of thousands.

The first pressing of a Paramount by an established star would run to a maximum of one hundred thousand records; final sales of Paramount hits might have doubled that figure. This total attested to the enormous profit that was to be found in a product beamed at a tenth of the nation's population, who purchased records far out of proportion to their numbers. The best-selling Victor pop hits, the *Talking Machine Journal* noted in 1923, averaged sales of 500,000, and those of Brunswick, 200,000.

In retrospect it is remarkable that Paramount was even competitive in the "race" field, for it had the poorest sound quality of any contemporary 75¢ record. "You couldn't get anything on Paramount," Harry Charles lamented. "I put some good songs on there; you'd never know it." The defect in Paramount's sound lay in its manufacturing rather than recording process.

Paramounts were manufactured at a company plant in Grafton, Wisconsin, a small town on the Milwaukee River some eight miles southwest of Port Washington.<sup>1</sup> The plant, a four-story wooden building located on Falls Road, had originally been used by the Sheboygan Knitting Company, which had employed an all-female work force and had been converted to a furniture factory when the Dennetts dissolved the business in 1904.<sup>2</sup> The man responsible for tooling the building as a record plant was probably Walter J. Klopp, (c. 1890-1940), a chair company machinist who worked as the plant superintendent and was in charge of its daily operations, although M. A. Supper held the title of plant manager.

Six days a week—  
45 cents an  
hour...

The plant operated six days a week, opening for business at seven o'clock in the morning and closing at five in the afternoon. In the summer months it sometimes remained open until nine at night, continuously pressing records. In 1920, before the advent of Paramount's "race" series, it employed some 35 or 40 workers; in the mid-1920s, its staff doubled. Their wages ranged between 45 cents and 52 cents an hour; the highest-paid employee earned 60 cents an hour. "Nowadays, you couldn't get a dog for that," the superintendent of the pressing room, Alfred Schultz, remarked in the early 1970s

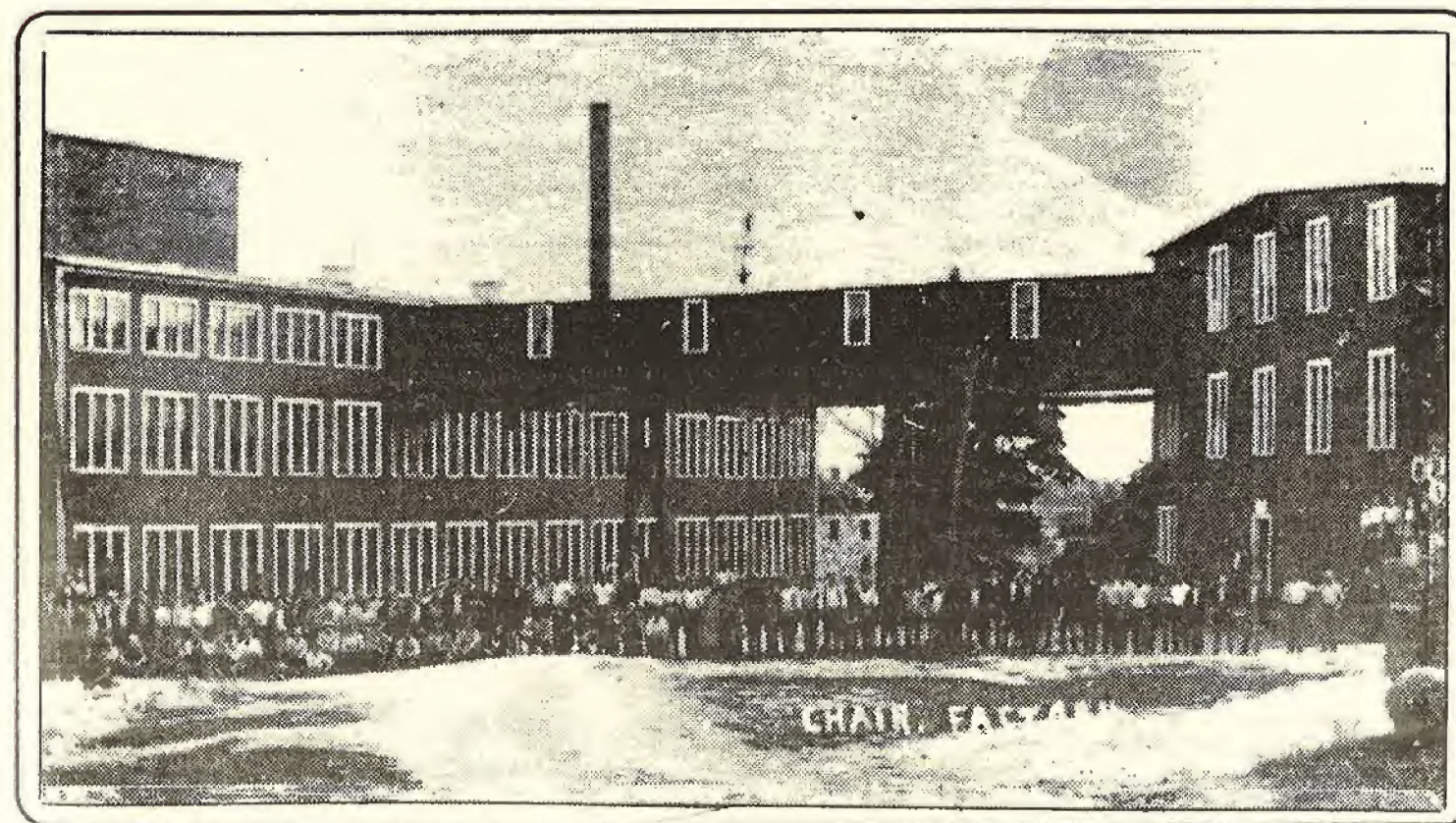
Standard  
ingredients:  
"rotten clay,  
cotton filler, lamp  
black."

The manufacturing process took place in three separate rooms, each measuring about 100 feet by 300 feet. (The top floor of the factory was left vacant.) Production began in a second floor room called the "sifting room", where locally imported china clay that was the basic ingredient of the 78 record was unpacked from bags and purified of debris.<sup>3</sup> The clay was sifted through a screen to remove lint and dirt; in the process so much dust was generated that it was necessary to seal off the room from the rest of the plant. Then, mechanical shakers mixed the



courtesy of MICHAEL D. CORRENTIAL (Yesterday's Memories)

ORIGINAL FACTORY: Wisconsin Chair Company, Port Washington, Wisconsin  
(from a postcard dated June 29, 1905)



courtesy of ED RAPOLLO

GRAFTON, WISCONSIN: Paramount converted this chair factory to a record-pressing plant. In 1929, a recording studio was set up on the second floor of the smaller building at right. 9



Plant capacity  
reached  
35,000 records  
per day...

Each press could manufacture some 700 records per day. At its peak, the plant was able to manufacture (according to varying estimates of Schultz and another plant employee) between 20,000 and 35,000 records per day. The plant's production capacity was retarded by its reliance on water power rather than electricity to generate heat. As early as 1923 the conventional automated press could turn out two records a minute; the Paramount, by contrast, took between two and a half to three minutes to manufacture after being placed within the press.

Harry Charles:  
"the records had  
static in 'em when  
they were new."

What emerged from Paramount's more laborious process was an inferior record with grating surface noise, thanks to the company's use of cheap filler material. As Harry Charles put it, "the records had static in 'em when they were new." Apparently, Paramount executives were determined to produce records at less than the prevailing \$1.50 per hundred which the *Talking Machine Journal* of 1923 cited as the manufacturing price for records "of good quality".

Although Alfred Schultz claimed that Paramount received no complaints because of its surface noise, even the least sophisticated dealer was likely to detect the inadequacy of Paramount's "tin pan tone", as the Mississippi dealer H. C. Speir called it. What dealers were unlikely

to surmise was the deliberateness with which Paramount produced a shoddy product. Speir speculated: "Their factories were run by water. Wasn't run like other factories. When you get, say, 40-60 miles north of Chicago, you're outta this world. It was about a 100 miles to this place from outta Chicago. Well, that's just too far north. You don't make good records that far north due to that climate...cold weather affects wax and hot weather affects wax."

Wholesalers paid  
27 1/2¢ per  
record—dealers  
45¢...

After being sanded, edged, and inspected for smoothness, a record was tucked in a sleeve and packed in a wooden crate in the shipping room on the third floor of the factory. Records were then shipped by train to company wholesalers, who paid 27 1/2¢ per record and marked them up to the standard 45¢ for dealers. A wholesaler could order a single box, which amounted to 25 records. Each wholesaler prepaid his order and had the option of returning ten percent of his unsold merchandise against credit for new merchandise. This return system, which had been inaugurated by Brunswick in January of 1923 and was not standard within the industry,<sup>6</sup> caused much grumbling within Paramount. "If we got a 100 records back," Alfred E. Schultz recalled, "that was a lotta money spent." This statement amply attests to the nigardliness of Paramount's executives: 100 unsold records (which would eventually be ground-up and reused) represented a trifling loss of \$27.50 in revenue.

Thanks to Paramount's fixation with overhead, it did nothing in terms of record promotion other than place regular advertisements in the *Chicago Defender*, a black weekly which claimed a circulation of 200,000 in the 1920s. The copy was prepared by a younger Chair Com-

pany employee named Henry Stephany and given to a Milwaukee advertising company for layout in cartoon form. It would have been a simple matter for Paramount to generate additional *Defender* publicity on behalf of its artists through Mayo Williams, who was a friend of the newspaper's founder Robert S. Abbot. However, except for periodic requests for photographs of artists (which Williams arranged for his friend Dan Burley, a *Defender* employee, who later became a reporter for the *New York Daily News*, to take), there was no coordination between its sales and recording branches.<sup>7</sup>

Paramount ads  
were "from a  
white man's  
point of view."

Paramount's *Defender* advertisements followed an unvarying formula, dramatizing the lyrics of a featured song with only scant mention of the artist who produced it. The records of non-entities and company hit-makers were given the same gloss. The accompanying copy, Mayo Williams thought, showed no understanding of the "race" customer. "You never saw any language in those ads that was typically Negroid," he said. "They could have used a lot more Negro slang expressions than they did. They wrote the ads definitely from a white man's point of view." The primary purpose of the ads was to obtain mail order customers, and each ad had a trailer reading:

**Clip this ad—take it to your dealer. If he can't supply genuine Paramount Records, order directly from the factory.**

No other company of the period attempted to solicit business in this fashion, which enabled Paramount to reach customers in areas where it had no distribution, and earn a higher mark-up than was possible through the intermediary of a wholesaler.

## Exclusive Okeh Feature



### THE NORFOLK JAZZ QUARTETTE

THE NORFOLK JAZZ QUARTETTE is another lucky number for Okeh Dealers. Their music is best described as improvisations that are unlike any others. It reflects the original negro folk songs but to the monotonous chanting is added more harmony and weird jazzed chants. The initial release of "JELLY ROLL BLUES" totalled a sales FOUR times greater than any popular hit in that bulletin. These figures forecast the great possibilities in profits for the trade. You may be interested to know that it isn't the colored race which is responsible for this jump in record sales, the big demand comes from the white people. We see in this group a means to boost sales and because this is so evident we are getting ready to forcefully push their records. There will be a generous distribution of literature and advertising, everything will be done to help make their records popular.

#### ORDER BIG

#### THEN FEATURE

- The act of really introducing them to your customers rests with you. Play them, talk about them. You can't help getting enthusiastic. And your enthusiasm is well protected by the fact that they are exclusively Okeh.
- |              |                        |                        |
|--------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 4318         | JELLY ROLL BLUES       | Norfolk Jazz Quartette |
| 10 in., 85c. | SOUTHERN JACK          | Norfolk Jazz Quartette |
| 4345         | MONDAY MORNING BLUES   | Norfolk Jazz Quartette |
| 10 in., 85c. | STANDING ON THE CORNER | Norfolk Jazz Quartette |
| 4366         | PREACHER MAN BLUES     | Norfolk Jazz Quartette |
| 10 in., 85c. | WIDE WIDE WORLD        | Norfolk Jazz Quartette |

**Okeh Records**  
General Phonograph Corporation  
25 West 45th Street, New York City

courtesy of STEPHEN CALT

This 1921 ad hoped to counteract fears of surging black shoppers in white-owned stores.

Customers would order the records C.O.D. and pay a postage charge that amounted to 52¢ for six records. Although Paramount may have had upwards of 10,000 people on its mailing list, most of the company's customers, Mayo Williams said, were illiterate, and therefore immune to such overtures.

One sales gimmick Paramount used to attract mail order customers was to offer a "book of the blues" containing photographs and biographies of its most popular artists, along with sheet music of sample Paramounts. "Send us your name and address and we will send you a free copy of this book," a Paramount *Defender* ad stated. At least two editions were prepared, in 1924 and 1927. Only the second *Book of Blues* is extant: a 40-page production, it contained photo features on six artists and sheet music for 30 Paramount songs. The fanciful and vague

copy indicates that the author knew nothing about the singers he described, while the lead sheets (obtained through Mayo Williams, who was unaware of the enterprise) took liberties with the lyrics of the songs.

Although Paramount periodically employed record salesmen, the company basically had a one-man sales force consisting of M. A. Supper.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the most innovative technique Supper used to reach the prospective "race" customer was to enlist door-to-door salesmen through the *Defender*. This gambit was launched in September of 1923, with the company's 24th "race" offering, Alberta Hunter's *Vampin' Brown*.

**ALBERTA OFFERS YOU A JOB!**  
*It's easy. Just take orders from your friends and relatives for these new Paramount Race hits. Everybody wants one or two—just show the list and let 'em choose. You get a big commission on every sale. Hundreds of men are making from \$20 to \$60 a month in spare time. Write for special agent's proposition and free salesman's outfit.*

A follow-up advertisement hinted at the prospect that a customer looking for Paramounts would return empty-handed from a dealer:

*It's easy to sell these great song successes...You, too, can develop a profitable business of your own. We start you—it's easy, pleasant work—full or part time. There are thousands of localities where we have no dealers.*

Indeed, in the early 1920s, Paramount records were so scarce in many southern localities that Pullman porters did a profitable business in selling Paramounts they obtained at Mayo Williams' office. The latter recalled: "They'd come to Chicago, see, Chicago was a railroad headquarters then...They had orders for 'em and would pay for 'em, the wholesale price...Then they'd sell 'em both to dealers and private persons. For instance, a man in Bogalusa, Louisiana might have heard or read of this record advertised in the *Defender*. He would say: 'The next time you go to Chicago pick me up this record'; it was a word of mouth situation. Then they'd sell 'em sometimes for a dollar apiece, as much as the traffic would bear: 'This is a scarce



The Paramount Book  
of Blues

THE NEW YORK RECORDING LABORATORIES  
INCORPORATED  
Port Washington, Wisconsin

TITLE	PAGE
Alabama Bound	32
Back Door Blues	38
Bad Feeling Blues	17
Bad Luck Woman Blues	29
Barrel House Blues	11
Black Horse Blues	8
Black Snake Moan	4
Butter and Egg Man Blues	31
Cherry Pickin' Blues	24
Chicago Monkey Man Blues	22
Death Letter Blues	21
Early Morning Blues	16
'Fore Day Creep	20
Freight Train Blues	40
How Long, Daddy, How Long	23
Jack o' Diamonds	7
Jealous Hearted Blues	12
Long Lonesome Blues	5
Mecca Flat Blues	35
Moon Shine Blues	10
Night Time Blues	13
Pig Meat Blues	39
Rising High Water Blues	6
Salty Dog	27
Shake That Thing	26
Slow Drivin' Moan	14
Take Me Back Blues	28
Too Tight Drag	18
Up the Way Bound	30
Whiskey Blues	37



# Blind Lemon Jefferson



AN anyone imagine a fate more horrible than to find that one is blind? To realize that the beautiful things one hears about — one will never see? Such was the heart-rending fate of Lemon Jefferson, who was born blind and realized, as a small child, that life had withheld one glorious joy from him — sight. Then — environment began to play its important part in his destiny. He could hear—and he heard the sad hearted, weary people of his homeland, Dallas — singing weird, sad melodies at their work and play, and unconsciously he began to imitate them — lamenting his fate in song. He learned to play a guitar, and for years he entertained his friends freely — moaning his weird songs as a means of forgetting his affliction. Some friends who saw great possibilities in him, suggested that he commercialize his talent — and as a result of following their advice — he is now heard exclusively on Paramount.

Shake That Thing
CHARLIE JACKSON

1. Now down in Georgia there's a dance that's new There ain't nothin' to it it's  
2. old folks do it and the young folks too but the young folks like the old folks  
3. grandpa Johnson grabbed sister Kate he shook her like you shake the  
4. Old Uncle Mose the jolly rolikind He got a hump in his back try to shake  
5. It ain't no Charlestown ain't no pigman way Nobody has to give you lessons to

1. Oh won't you let me be your salt-y dog I  
2. There's just one thing that wor-ries my mind  
3. The anawered I've heerd in my life was  
4. Lil' fish big fish in the wa-ter, Come  
5. Like look-in' for a see-die in the sand try-  
6. God made a wo-man and he made her fun-ny,

don't want to be your man at all You salt-y dog, You salt-y dog,  
all of these bums and none of mine You salt-y dog, You salt-y dog,  
when Uncle Bud nearly saw me kiss his wife You salt-y dog, You salt-y dog,  
on here and give me my quar-ter You salt-y dog, You salt-y dog,  
it's to find a gal that ain't got no man You salt-y dog, You salt-y dog,  
Lips round her mouth's sweeter than hon-ey You salt-y dog, You salt-y dog,  
Oh hon-ey ha-by let me be your salt-y dog

Salty dog Oh you salt-y dog, dog,

THE PARAMOUNT BOOK OF THE BLUES—  
(Courtesy of STEPHEN CALT & THE LATE MAYO WILLIAMS)

(from PAGE 3)—THE PARAMOUNT BOOK OF THE BLUES





## Blind Blake

**W**E have all heard expressions of people "singing in the rain" or "laughing in the face of adversity," but we never saw such a good example of it, until we came upon the history of Blind Blake. Born in Jacksonville, in sunny Florida, he seems to have absorbed some of the sunny atmosphere — disregarding the fact that nature had cruelly denied him a vision of outer things. He could not see the things that others saw—but he had a better gift. A gift of an inner vision, that allowed him to see things more beautiful. The pictures that he alone could see made him long to express them in some way — so he turned to music. He studied long and earnestly — listening to talented pianists and guitar players, and began to gradually draw out harmonious tunes to fit every mood. Now that he is recording exclusively for Paramount, the public has the benefit of his talent, and agrees, as one body, that he has an unexplainable gift of making one laugh or cry as he feels, and sweet chords and tones that come from his talking guitar express a feeling of his mood.

(from PAGE 15)—THE PARAMOUNT BOOK OF THE BLUES



## Charlie Jackson

**F**ROM the ancient—historical city of New Orleans, came Charlie Jackson — a witty—cheerful—kind hearted man—who, with his joyous sounding voice and his banjo, sang and strummed his way into the hearts of thousands of people. When he first contracted to sing and play for Paramount — many pessimistic persons laughed; and said they were certain no one wanted to hear comedy songs sung by a man strumming a banjo. But it wasn't long before they realized how wrong they were. Charlie and his records took the entire country by storm, and now — people like nothing better than to come home after a tiring and busy day and play his records. His hearty voice and gay, harmonious strumming on the banjo, causes their cares and worries to dwindle away, and gives them a careful frame of mind, and makes life one sweet song.

(from PAGE 25)—THE PARAMOUNT BOOK OF THE BLUES





“Ma” Rainey

**F**ROM the Bottoms of Georgia came the mother of the blues, the Gold Neck Mama of Stageland—Ma Rainey. From earliest childhood—Gertrude Rainey felt that the blues were expressive of the heart of the south, and the sad hearted people who toiled from sun-up to sundown—crooning weird tunes to lighten their labors. She took up the stage, as a profession—making friends, and gaining popularity,—not for a moment losing sight of her life ambition—to bring to the north, the beautiful melodies of the south—and a better understanding of the sorrow filled hearts of its people. After many years of appearing in theatres of the south, Ma Rainey went to New York—astounding and bewildering the northerners with what they called “queer music.” She left, and still they did not understand. After a while, they began to hear more and more of the delightful music sung as only Ma Rainey can sing it—and gradually they began to love this type of music as she did. Ma Rainey taught many blues singers who are so popular today,—and is looked up to and worshipped as the true mother of the blues by all of her large following.

(from PAGE 9)—THE PARAMOUNT BOOK OF THE BLUES



Ida Cox

**B**ORN and Bred in Knoxville, in the hills of sunny Tennessee. At an early age she began to sing and delighted the ears of her listeners with her sweet melodious music. Singing always—humming at her work and play—thru joy or sorrow. She appeared on the stage, when a mere child, and insinuated herself into the hearts of her audience in such a way, that the booking agencies of the south found their offices swamped with requests for Ida Cox—queen of the blues. A few years ago, she was brought to the notice of the Paramount Company, by virtue of her ever-growing popularity, and was contracted to sing exclusively for Paramount. The public hailed her advent into the record world, with delight, and the wondering north opened its arms to welcome the Queen of the Blues who had already captured the south.

(from PAGE 19)—THE PARAMOUNT BOOK OF THE BLUES



record; I had to do so-and-so to get this record—which would be a damn lie. The stores in those small places, the people in those small places, were all hard up for records."

The crux of Paramount's sales efforts lay in the calls Supper personally paid on prospective distributors and dealers. Some of the stores he contacted were likely gleaned from mailing lists: in the early 1920s, for example, R. L. Polk and Company offered 8,000 such lists, including one consisting of nearly 25,000 retail furniture dealers.<sup>9</sup> Once Paramount became a "race" label, Supper's sights necessarily turned south, where most of the nation's blacks then resided. Because the Wisconsin Chair Company (which did most of its retailing in the Midwest) had no southern market, Supper was forced to rely on his own wits to land jobbers.

In what proved to be the only publicity item Paramount garnished after its conversion to "race" music, the *Talking Machine Journal* reported in March, 1924: *According to M. A. Supper, general manager of the New York Recording Laboratories, business in the Southern states is very good. Mr. Supper and Mr. A. E. Satherley, New York manager, returned recently from a tour of the South where they had been investing (sic) distribution and appointing new jobbers.*

Obtaining Southern distribution was no doubt an uphill battle, all the more so for a company that had no wholesale record branches of its own. Southern retailers were the least sophisticated of the nation's estimated 500 distributors and 18,000 dealers.<sup>10</sup> Even the most rustic record dealers, however, had a preference for brand-name labels. "Music stores back then," H. C. Speir said, "they catered more or less to Victor, Columbia, and, I guess, the next one would be Okeh." Speir recalled that many Southern dealers were loathe to handle Paramounts because they did not wish to attract black customers. Indeed, a basic reason for the record industry's early antipathy towards black music was a fear that it would create a surge of black shoppers in white-owned stores. A *Talking Machine Journal* advertisement Okeh placed on behalf of the Norfolk Jazz Quartette in 1921 sought to reassure dealers on this score: *The initial release of JELLY ROLL BLUES' totalled a sales FOUR times greater than any popular hit in that bulletin....You may be interested to*

*know that it isn't the colored race that is responsible for this jump in record sales, the big demand comes from white people.*

It is likely that most record companies that recorded black music originally intended to sell the records to white customers, only to find, as Harry Charles crassly put it, that "the one that bought the race record was the nigger."

Southern dealers who catered to the "race" trade had to comply with cumbersome Jim Crow laws in the process. H. C. Speir, for example, installed segregated entrances and listening booths in the Jackson, Mississippi record store he opened in February, 1925. This investment was practical because blacks (he found) outspent local whites "50 to one" on records. Although Speir's "race" business (which generated \$500 worth of sales on Saturdays) was probably more extensive than that of most Southern dealers, his attitude towards his customers was probably typical of the "race" dealer. Deeming them an ignorant lot, he never quizzed them as to why they favored certain records, or artists. Instead, he ordered records on the basis of his own reaction to sample records obtained from wholesalers. Apparently, the wholesalers themselves operated in the same fashion.

In 1923 or 1924 Supper secured Paramount's first major Southern wholesaler, the E. E. Forbes Piano Company of Birmingham. Its music department was supervised by Harry Charles (1900-1973), a cocksure, waggish man whose spinal deformity would cause Paramount executives to dub him "Humpy Harry". Charles was strongly drawn to all forms of black music, and had liked blues since childhood: "You could hear it anywhere," he recalled, "in the (cotton) fields...everywhere you'd go you'd hear it." Ever since deciding "never to be poor" at the age of nine, he had been an incurable pitchman. While still in grade school in Jasper, Alabama, he sold victrolas at a local music store. In 1919, after selling musical wares on a free-lance basis, he became a salaried employee of Forbes, which was recovering from a recent bankruptcy. Besides pianos and victrolas, Forbes carried an early line of radios, which were then the latest rage of the music industry, but their reception left something to be desired. "About once a week you'd get a sound outta Cincinnati," Charles reported. After

listening to a Paramount sample record, Charles recommended that Forbes carry the product. "Forbes would do what I told him," he smugly recalled.

"Charles wore out a new car every 3 months."

As a Paramount distributor Forbes jobbed records over 13 states between Tennessee and Louisiana, sometimes to the tune of 500 dollars a day, or the equivalent of 3,000 record sales to dealers. In the course of making sales calls, Charles logged 2,000 miles a week and wore out a new car every three months. He proved so successful on the road that Paramount eventually lured him away from Forbes and whittled the latter's franchise down to its native state. As a full-time Paramount salesman, Charles covered Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana on behalf of the company.<sup>11</sup>

"I put it over myself," Charles said of Paramount's "race" distribution system. "They didn't do it. They didn't have any jobbers." Whether or not this claim was true, there was no doubt that Charles was a supremely successful salesman, thanks both to his relish for "race" music and his refusal to be daunted by reversals. "You got to be rough in this business line," he said of selling. In the Depression, when "all the rich mens in New York was jumpin' outta the window," Charles lost no time bewailing the blighted record business: he butchered his own cows and opened a meat market. Even when he amassed considerable post-war wealth by selling Kimball pianos and Arabian horses, no score remained too small to interest him: when contacted in 1970 for material on Paramount, he immediately sought to enlist the interviewers in a penny-ante scheme to promote a Birmingham gospel singer he had known from the 1940s. "If you could just hear him," he rhapsodized, as though offering a magical experience, "just one time, just sit out there



courtesy of GAYLE DEAN WARDLOW

HARRY CHARLES (above at age 43) relied on guile to sell Paramounts

and play a piano just one time, you would know what a nigger singer is."

In order to sell Paramounts, Charles relied less on enthusiasm than on guile. "I always worked 'tricks' since the time I'se eleven," he said. "YOU got to work 'tricks' if you do anything successful..." To Charles, a recalcitrant dealer represented a challenge. When an Augusta, Georgia dealer resisted his sales spiel, he persuaded the dealer to let him wait on his next customer. By selling the customer a Paramount, he landed the account. A Chattanooga dealer who had turned away Paramount salesmen on five occasions succumbed to one of his pet "tricks": "...They asked me, could I 'sell' him?

I said: 'Yes, if you put up the money; it'll cost you some money.' I hired me about five or six Negroes to follow me in the store...I had one little comedian say the bossman just give him two dollars, and every one of 'em tried to buy somethin' (i.e., a Paramount)." By this ruse, which H.C. Speir derided as "the oldest trick in the book," Charles managed to sell two or three hundred Paramounts to the dealer.

"Get dirty with it—you'll make a hit then."

On another occasion Charles learned that Ma Rainey was performing at a carnival in Birmingham. "We carried her out to the (local Paramount) dealer," he said. "But she couldn't make a hit. I said: 'Get dirty with it—you'll make a hit then. So she got dirty...' By "getting dirty," she managed to spark a sudden demand for her relatively chaste records.

Charles was equally disposed to sell salvation as sex. To convert a pious dealer in the Alabama hills who wanted no part of Paramount, he arranged for the company to record Birmingham's most popular minister, J. O. Hanes, and to display his picture on the label of his record, a Fundamentalist harangue:

*France turned away from God and her people became pleasure-loving and she became a nation of race suicide. Great Britain and America sowed bad public houses and saloons until the people were becoming the drunkards of the world.*

He then marched Hanes into the record store to testify to the virtues of the Paramount label.<sup>12</sup>

Relying primarily on his gifted tongue, Charles worked without sample records. His basic technique was to tout a given record as a "hit"; upon placing a successful Paramount in a store, he would then persuade it to carry the entire line. On the premise that demand generates supply, he only concerned himself with securing retail outlets for Paramount. "If you get the big dealers," he explained, "you got the jobbers." He visited "anybody that sold records," remarking: "I wouldn't miss a-one." While no form of dry goods outlet was written off as a potential dealer ("Any kinda store'd sell it sometimes; you couldn't tell"), his best clients were invariably department stores of large Southern cities. At these stores he would lease a prefabricated record counter and collect 40 percent of their monthly gross. The stores would in turn attract black shoppers by blaring the records over loudspeakers. "They played 'em all the time," Charles said, "and if you had a hit you'd sell thousands." His largest department





From the collection of SHERMAN TOLIN

# SELLING SALVATION: Birmingham fundamentalist Hanes testified to the virtues of Paramount

store account was with LSM of Atlanta, which sold 6000 dollars worth of Paramounts per week.<sup>13</sup>

He once enlisted Ma Rainey to sell records at a department store outlet: "...She came to Atlanta to play a theatre; she looked me up 'cause she knew me. I said: 'How 'bout playin' at a record store?' 'I'd do anything,' she said, 'you ask me to do.' And she brought that whole band up to Silver's ten-cent store and she played about a hour...they're sellin' them records there fast as she could hand 'em out. She did that free; she said: 'I wouldn't charge you nothing.'"<sup>14</sup>

"Charles' books revealed a \$2,500 shortage..."

Although Charles drew no commission for his efforts on behalf of the company, he did a lucrative sideline in operating a string of 21 Paramount retail outlets, in such cities as Richmond, Macon, Birmingham, and Jacksonville. Both he and his employees often put pleasure before business. Once, while vacationing in Florida, he entrusted his Atlanta dealership to his nephew, "the fastest boy you ever saw... That fella got mixed up with some gals, and he sold them 45-cent records for a dime to make a lotta money." When Charles' books revealed a \$2,500 shortage (representing the illicit sale of some 10,000 records), Paramount dispatched an auditor to the store. Charles then dissuaded Moeser from prosecuting the errant assistant by ceding one of his dealerships to the firm. The Atlanta outlet then folded of its own accord. "It was a good deal," he admitted, "I didn't have enough sense to run it. Too many gals." A branch office Paramount later opened at the Peachtree Arcade like-

wise folded in 1929, leaving the company with no distributor for a city with a black population sufficient to support two black vaudeville houses, a segregated amusement park, and a weekly newspaper.

Charles' own attempt to operate a Paramount wholesaler (in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1926) ended in disaster when he was unable to collect money from dealers who bought on credit.

"I went to Port Washington," he recalled, "and old Moeser said, 'How much money you got?' You know the old man's sharp."

"I say: 'I got 3000.'"

"He say: 'It'll last ya 30 days.'"

"I say: 'What you mean?'"

He say: 'Won't nobody pay you...It'll carry you three-four months; you can't operate.'"

"I says: 'Maybe we can.'"

"Well, when you get so you can't operate, call me, and I'll come down there and take all your stock...and put you back on the road.'"

"And damn it wasn't 'fore long when I had to call him. I said: 'come get it.'"

In his first month, Charles had collected 10 dollars from the retailers he had serviced.

As a record salesman, on the other hand, Charles "made a fortune" by his lights. To his satisfaction, he also cost Paramount a fortune. His bloated expense accounts once led Otto Moeser to remark caustically: "You'd need a bank to finance him." To Charles, this complaint came as a compliment, attesting to the necessity of his high-priced services. "He was kiddin'," he said, "but he knew I cost a lotta money."

Although Harry Charles may have obtained Paramount's first important "race" outlets, it was Supper who landed its largest distributor. This was the St. Louis Music Company, a small mail order firm founded in 1923 to retail musical instruments and victrolas. Supper probably contacted the company on the basis of its advertisement offering mail order Okeh "race" items which appeared in the *Chicago De-*



78 RECORD DUSTER  
PRODUCED BY ST. LOUIS  
MUSIC CO.—(PARAMOUNT'S  
LARGEST DISTRIBUTOR)



courtesy  
Stephen  
Calt

VICE-PRESIDENT HERBERT S. SCHIELE—ordering "race" records was a guessing game

fender in October 20, 1923, a month after Paramount began soliciting salesmen in the same paper. In any event, St. Louis Music was already wholesaling Paramounts when it merged with a larger St. Louis music firm, the Artophone Corporation, in 1925.<sup>15</sup> In the mid-1920s, Artophone had branch offices in Memphis, Dallas, Kansas City, and New Orleans and wholesaled Paramount, Okeh, and Vocalion. "All three sold good," its Memphis salesman Earl Montgomery recalled. "They were the outstanding labels in 'race' and hillbilly at that time." In addition to selling records, it produced and retailed the Artophone Talking Machine, which came in five models, the "race" favorite of which was a suitcase-styled portable priced at \$13.85.<sup>16</sup>

Artophone secretary and vice-president Herbert S. Schiele ordered new Paramounts "by the seat of my pants" after listening to samples left by Supper. "There was never any pressure to take them," recalled



HERWIN—RECORDED AND PRESSED BY  
PARAMOUNT FOR THE ST. LOUIS MUSIC CO.



Schiele. The hard-sell approach would have been futile, because ordering "race" records was largely a guessing-game. As Schiele explained: "...We would sit around and listen to them (the samples) and make our observations, and sometimes we were right, and sometimes we were wrong. It wasn't a scientific operation." Schiele and his colleagues had no criteria for sales success. "We never had a theory," he explained. "We would spend a long time listening (to samples) and trying to figure out the (potential) hits against the duds...our problem was: like any other business you have to give service. The big thing was to be sure and order enough so you had 'em when the orders started comin' in." He guessed that an initial Artophone order of an imagined Paramount "hit" would run to something like 50,000 records, a total easily exceeded by Okeh's largest Southern distributor, Polk Brockman of Atlanta, who ordered 100,000 copies of Sara Martin's *Sugar Blues* early in 1923 on a hunch that the novelty of its unadorned piano accompaniment would appeal to "race" customers.

"...With Paramount, our biggest business was with mail order," recalled Schiele, who considered Okeh his best-selling "race" product. Although Artophone retailed "race" records throughout Missouri and in southern Illinois, its primary retail markets for Paramounts were St. Louis and Memphis. In the former city, Paramounts were retailed in a variety of stores, including jewelry stores, shoeshine parlors, and confectioneries. "There wasn't any standard place," Schiele said. "...Now of course, your music stores and department stores were your biggest (outlets)..."

It was due to Paramount's reliance on Artophone that the company's most substantial retail markets in the middle and late 1920s were Arkansas and Mississippi, the state with the largest black population.<sup>17</sup> This territory was developed by Earl Montgomery, who had joined the company in late 1925 and worked out of its Memphis office, located in the McCall Building on McCall Street. Montgomery sold records to furniture stores, drug stores, general



courtesy of STEPHEN CALT

POLK BROCKMAN OF  
ATLANTA ORDERED  
100,000 COPIES OF  
SARA MARTIN'S *SUGAR BLUES*



courtesy of STEPHEN CALT

OKEH ARTIST SARA MARTIN

stores, and even to Mississippi Delta plantation commissaries.<sup>18</sup> Once, in the late 1920s, a black patron of a Greenwood, Mississippi drug store offered him five dollars for his sample record of Leroy Carr's *How Long Blues*, claiming that he could snare a sex partner that night on the basis of obtaining the record. "They used the records to fuck by," Montgomery said of his customers.

Although Earl Montgomery received a sales commission from Artophone, which even footed his dry cleaning bills, Maurice Supper drew only a straight salary from his parsimonious employers. It was probably for this reason that he decided to leave the firm in late 1924 or early 1925 and go into business for himself. With his brother-in-law Frederick Boerner (b. 1898), who had joined Paramount's plating department in 1920, Supper formed a Port Washington mail order record busi-

ness in January of 1925.<sup>19</sup> This concern, the F. W. Boerner Company, was probably the nation's only business that trafficked exclusively in "race" records. Its original mailing list was comprised of names Supper had accumulated from Paramount's *Chicago Defender* ads; eventually, the firm had a mailing list of some 25,000 names. Customers who furnished the company with names of persons who owned phonographs were offered free needles and records. Each month it mailed a circular to its customers, listing new releases from the labels it carried, which included Okeh, Columbia, and probably Vocalion in addition to Paramount, its best-selling label. As with Paramount's mail order operation, records were shipped C. O. D. About one customer in 10 failed to pay the C. O. D. charge, which included 35¢ postage for a shipment of four records (the average customer order).

In addition to Supper and Boerner, the firm employed four office girls and a stock boy. Though it drew customers as far as California, its strongest sales were concentrated in Mississippi and Alabama. A best-selling item would generate in excess of 10,000 orders. The best season for sales was the winter; summer months, for reasons Boerner and Supper could not fathom, were invariably slow. For this reason, the company began to develop a sideline in irrigation products. In time, its irrigation business surpassed its "race" record sales, and Supper (who also worked with the Gilson Bolens Manufacturing Company in Port Washington) would become a specialist in the latter field.<sup>20</sup>

Art Laibley  
replaces Maurice  
Supper as Sales  
Manager...

Although Paramount had the makings of a knowledgeable sales manager in Harry Charles, Moeser replaced Supper with a Chair

Company employee, Arthur C. Laibly (1894-c.1971). A native of Cincinnati, Laibly had been a salesman for the Port Washington Lumber Company before joining the chair company in a sales capacity in the early 1920s. Laibly was one of the few contemporary record salesmen with a musical background: "I've always been in music, my whole life, from a kid on, I've always had music," he reminisced. As a pop-oriented violinist, he had played for Williamson, West Virginia dances, provided music at a local silent movie house, as well as for dinner guests at a hotel; between 1909-1912, he worked in four Cincinnati orchestras. These experiences did not qualify him to sell records, however; when Earl Montgomery sheepishly admitted to his employer that he "couldn't tell one fuckin' note from another one," the latter assured him: "That's why I'm hiring you. These guys who know music can't sell doodley-shit." Moreover, Laibly had no experience in the record industry. His unlikely promotion to the job of Paramount sales manager and nominal recording director was probably a reflection of Moeser's dissatisfaction with Art Satherley, the ineffectual caretaker of its New York studio. Satherley would retain his job until 1928, thanks no doubt to his wife's connection with the Dennett family; Laibly's stewardship would result in a drastic change in Paramount's "race" catalog, as well as Mayo Williams' departure from the company.

#### FOOTNOTES:

1. Originally settled by German farmers in the 1840s, Grafton was incorporated as a village in 1898.
2. The knitting company's other plant was then sold to Edison.
3. The superior quality of Ozaukee County clay soil led to the early establishment of brick manufacturers in Port Washington.
4. The labels were obtained from the Forester Label Works of Milwaukee, which exacted a minimum order of 3,000 labels for each record.
5. The wax, which was two inches thick, was refrigerated immediately after being used for recording to prevent it from bubbling. It arrived at the factory packed in dry ice. Prior to 1922, the company lacked the know-how to convert the wax into masters; it obtained its copper-plated masters through an intermediary in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

6. Okeh had no return policy.
7. "Once in a great while," Williams notes, "they would send ads down there to me for approval."
8. In the spring of 1921, it hired a Victor salesman named Peter Spitz to act as a mid-western sales agent. The latter probably had no involvement with its "race" market.
9. These sold for \$7.50 per thousand names.
10. They were also among the most stubborn; a Birmingham record salesman named J. L. Ausban recalled advising a Florida, Alabama dealer to take ten copies of *Jim Jackson's Kansas City Blues* because it was a "killer" record. On his follow-up visit he found the dealer anxious to return his seven or eight remaining copies of the record. The dealer complained that after a customer had played the record at a gambling house one of its patrons threatened to kill him if he played it again, when the customer ignored the threat, he was shot by the gambler. "The dealer told me it caused a killing, and he didn't want that kind of record in his store," Ausban said. "I told him that wasn't what I meant by a 'killer' record."
11. That this was extensive territory for a single salesman is indicated by the statement of a Brunswick executive in 1924: "...we estimate that there should be maintained one salesman for the company to every 1,000,000 population. Dealers in the large population centers are visited every 30 days, while dealers in smaller and less remote sections, according to our salesmen's schedule, are visited every 60 to 90 days."
12. Hanes' sermon was issued around 1928 and featured in Paramount's recently created hillbilly series.
13. *The Talking Machine Journal* in 1927 estimated that chain stores accounted for about 30% of all musical merchandise sales. Although Paramount devised a 39¢ chain store subsidiary label, Broadway, which was administered by Art Satherley, Charles placed only regular Paramounts in his chain store accounts.
14. Henry Stephany's widow recalled attending a carnival on Port Washington's Green Bay Avenue with her husband and M. A. Supper to see Rainey.
15. In the early days of "race" recording, Artophone had been Okeh's wholesaler for Missouri, southern Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, and Arkansas, as well as a distributor for Arto Records.
16. Artophone was also briefly involved in publishing "race" compositions: "we sort of phased out of it because it wasn't that big of a deal and the artists...always wanted an advance on their 'sales'," Schiele recalled. "They always acted as though they had a hit, even if they



didn't have a hit."

17. The 1,000,000 blacks who lived in Mississippi in 1930 exceeded the combined black population of New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Memphis, Atlanta, and Birmingham.

18. Ray Kornblum, a "race" salesman for the St. Louis Music Supply Company (an Okeh wholesaler), placed records in funeral parlors, remarking: "They got 'em dead or alive."

19. They also operated a general store known as Boerner Brothers, of which Supper was president, Fred Boerner secretary, and another brother, Oscar, vice-president.

20. The company eventually became the Ideal Equipment Company. Supper served as its president until 1942, when he became vice-president.

# **COMING!**

**Paramount—Part 4  
will appear in Vol. 1,  
No.6**

*Blues and Spirituals by These Stars*



Norfolk Jub. Quar.



Charlie Jackson



"Ma" Rainey



Blind Blake



Bessie Smith



Blind Lemon Jefferson

**F. W. BOERNER COMPANY**  
Port Washington, Wisconsin  
MAIL ORDER ONLY  
All The Latest Blues, Spirituals and Sermons

Secretary of State  
Madison, Wis.

Dear Sir:

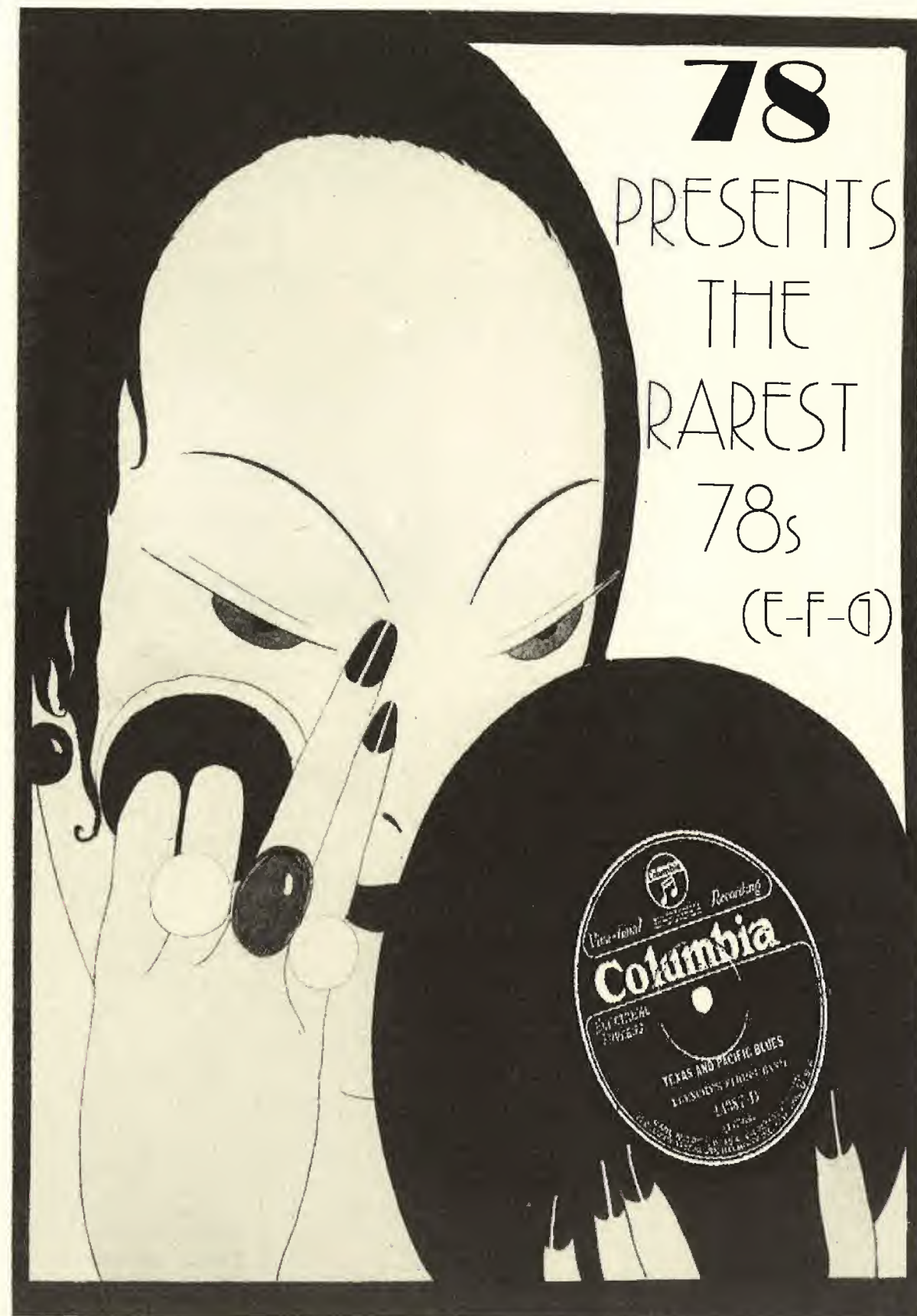
Enclosed please find check for \$10.00 which represents penalty for failure to report by April 1st. The writer is quite sure that this was taken care of at the time but I suppose we have no alternative but to pay the penalty. Would appreciate your checking your files again as 10 dollars is \$10.00 in these hard times.

Respectfully

F. W. Boerner Co.  
*[Signature]*  
F. W. Boerner

3068

(courtesy of ROBERT CRUMB)





Could this quote from the biographer of a prison-cell murderer apply to 78 collectors? "Every journalist who is not too stupid or too full of himself to notice what is going on knows that what he does is morally indefensible. He is a kind of confidence man, preying on people's poverty, ignorance, or loneliness, gaining their trust, and betraying them without remorse."

Relations between trading collectors can be adversarial and paranoid; the fear of "being taken" lingers like a faint odor.

One can just hear the late Jake Schneider (as the "Ghost of West 82nd Street") philosophizing in the darkness under the Hotel Endicott: "The worst motives come while collecting records ('Worsenheimer's drinking catches up with him—his life ends conveniently—I'll contact the widow'). Deception, secrecy, Paramounts, Gennetts—they arrive as suddenly as a marriage, then overwhelm like a great illness."

Understandably, some collectors hesitate to dip in these torpid pools. Invasion of privacy, fear of theft, pique at being overlooked are standby excuses.

The response to our last installment (C-D) was bellicose, yet reassuring—it delivered the message we suspected all along: more corpses of rare 78s lie under the first layer of carcasses (however, some of "you collectors" still remain in the shadows, comfortable with a pickpocket's "low profile").

As for the JAZZ (C-D) updates—Ken Crawford of Pittsburgh writes: "Yes, as you mentioned, and as I was going to advise you anyway, the Dickerson Argentine Odeon master pressing reissue catalog number was printed twice in error, on page 89—and both erroneous listings were different! The correct number, as I sent you, is OdArg 0295231...Oh yes—Tom Tsotsi writes that he and Sherwin Dunner both have copies of the Henry Allen Victor 23338—both E. Tom has had his for a year, and Sherwin got his after leaving the (1989 New Brunswick) 'bash'...This would bring the *known* copies up to five, and still quite a rarity." Charles



from the collection of DAVE JASEN

## LOU CALABRESE—Two copies reported

Huber of Greenwich, Connecticut recently turned up another (sixth) Allen Victor (N-), replacing his old E copy.

Chris Moreton of Scarsdale, N.Y. asks: "...I wonder whether you have taken into consideration the John D. Reid Collection of Early American Jazz. This collection which, other than condition, is fully catalogued, lies in boxes in the depths of the Arkansas Arts Center in Little Rock (before you think of writing to them and asking if they will sell, forget it! I already tried!!). Copies of the following 78s in the A-D category are in the collection: Jimmy Blythe, Paramounts 12368 and 12376, Vocalion 1135, Blythe & Burton Gennett 6502, Jimmy Bertrand Vocalion 1099, Wilton Crawley Victor 23292, Genevieve Davis Victor 20648, Dixieland Thumpers Paramount 12525, Johnny Dodds Victor 23396 and Vocalion 15632."

Writes Robert Crumb of Winters, California: "The rarest 78s' was of great interest, being the typical 78

fetishist that I am—but it seems to me your approach to this project is very lackadaisical and not very 'scientific'—but maybe you prefer to play it that way—casually, almost whimsically—that does have a certain appeal—a playful approach—it seems to be mostly about this certain handful of collectors known over the years...which records they have or don't have. There's many collectors out there...who have amassed incredible collections...they get lots of fabulously rare items from older collectors who are selling out. They spend big bucks for Gennetts and Paramounts, Vocalions and Champions...There are a lot more copies of these rare records around than you might think...not to brag, but I myself even possess some of the items you list as only two or three known copies, and I know of other collectors who also have copies...for instance, I have 'Indiana Mud' by Eddie Carlew's Baby Aristocrats on Gennett (V+)... 'Stardust' on Gennett ('E' with cracks), 'Chlorinda' on Pathé with small crack (E), 'The Skunk' by

Buddy Christian's Jazz Rippers on Perfect (V-), the Jack Danford record (E+), 'The Drag' by Charlie Davis Orch. (E), 'Funny Fumble' by Harry Dial's Bluesicians E+, but cracked, and Zwiggoff also has a very clean copy, and I saw one at Altshuler's recently, part of the Mantler collection; the other Harry Dial was there also: 'Poison.'"

Marc Ginzberg of Eastchester, New York lists E or better copies of Blanche Calloway Okeh 8279, Oliver Cobb Paramount 13002, Ann Cook Victor 20579, Dickerson OdArg 0193329 (the original), Dixieland Thumpers Paramount 12525, both Dodds & Parham Paramounts, the very rare Dodds Victor 23396, the Roberta Dudley/Kid Ory Sunshine ("I sold a very fine copy to the W.C., and each of the three Ory's exists in Switz."), and Junie Cobb's Paramount 12382 ("V+"). Dave Freeman of Floyd, Virginia, reports an E- copy of Dixieland Thumpers Paramount 12594 ("with, I guess, the common take of Oriental Man {take 1}").

And from Dave Jasen of Flushing, New York: "You list the Lou Calabrese Gennett 6421 as 'not reported.' I've had a copy for years. Mine is about E-. Since 'Lip-Stick' is a rag (and is listed in my book *Recorded Ragtime*), I was especially interested in it. I also have the very rare sheet music of that tune...published by the composer, Charles Rosoff...also have the Carroll Dickerson Savoyagers on Argentine Odeon 0295231."

Andy Hale of Santa Monica, California lists an E to E+ copy of Oliver Cobb's Paramount 13002. Another copy (E+) of Paramount 13002 is owned by Max Vreede of The Hague (Netherlands). Max also reports E- copies of Blanche Calloway Okeh 8279 and Eddie Carlew Gennett 6184, Chicago Loopers Perfect 14910—"I have it E+, replacing a previous V+ copy." A second copy of the very rare Sonny Clay on Sonny Clay 22/23 (E- 1 1/2" hc) also shows up in Vreede's collection, plus a V+ copy of the Clay Vocalion 1050. Max's inventory also includes Ann Cook on Victor 20579 (E+), Ida Cox (Dodds) Paramount 12381 (E), Genevieve Davis Victor 20648 (N-), Charlie Davis Vocalion 15701 (one

of many to turn up), and Roberta Dudley on Sunshine 3001 (V+).

Max Vreede also writes "I used to have a V copy of Challenge 801, which is indeed as by Silver Slipper Orchestra and not as Café Royal Boys. I've replaced this with an E copy of (Tiny Parham's) Paramount 12586."

Don Kent of Brooklyn notes: "As to the Teddy Darby Paramount 12907, I have it E to E+ in a trade with Kinney Rorer (1976) and the V+ copy (with a flake on one side) is probably my dupe, which I had junked in Greenville, S.C. and then sold to an English collector... (Do you really think the Darby should be in the jazz section just because it has Baby Jay cornet on one side? Would you put Tommy Johnson in the jazz section because he had the misfortune to record with the New Orleans Nehi Boys?)."

"I'm also surprised you left the James Crawford Gennett (6536) out of the rarest jazz—surely a very uncommon record." Salvatore, our 78 *Quarterly* correspondent reports "It's a minefield (studded with pot-holes) out there. James Crawford is a surprise ho-hummer...reminiscent of the unexpected fall a collector takes as high bidder on Tiny Parham's Black Patti 8038."

Bernard Klatzko of Glen Cove, New York lists these jazz scarcities (which formed a small part of the collection he had sold to the late Nick Perls): Buddy Christian Okeh 8311 E+ and Perfect 118 V, Ann Cook Victor 20579 N- (another N- Cook Victor is credited to Don Kent), Cookies Gingersnaps Okeh 8369 E- (hc NAP) and Okeh 8390 V, and Genevieve Davis Victor 20648 E-. He also had both Dodds & Parham Paramounts 12483 E (to Perls) and 12471 N- (auctioned).

Eugene Miller of Islington, Canada adds two: the Cellar Boys Vocalion 1503 E and Jack Danford on PRCSF label E+. Kip Lornell of Washington, D.C. had an E- copy of Paul Cornelius' "I Found A New Baby/I'm Still Dreaming Of You" on Champion 16734 (but "traded it"). And Fred Smith of North Riverside, Illinois reports an E- copy of the Dixie Boys' "Poplar Street Blues" on Autograph (he describes it as "a

record I've never considered an outstanding example of jazz").

Continuing on to the C-D "COUNTRY" BLUES—Jerry Zolten of Tyrone, PA informs us of a second copy of Bob Campbell's "Starvation Farm Blues" on Vocalion 02798, "Looks beat, but plays just fine." Don Kent notes: "Perls had Bob Campbell Vocalion 02830 E, I think, from Altshuler."

Kent also writes "George Carter: I think this guy is really Charlie Lincoln/Willie Baker...like Willie Baker, he never sold very well, and I would argue that there are less than 10 copies of either coupling, based on roughly 25 years of looking at collections, etc. I do have an E+ copy (which I think I got from Stendahl) of Paramount 12750 and a V to V+ of Paramount 12769, which I got in a trade. I also know that Paul Garon has both of these, and Spottswood was certain to have had a copy of 12769 in decent shape (since he issued it on 'Kings Of The 12-String' more years ago than I want to remember)."

Bernard Klatzko reports selling Carter's Paramount 12769 (N-) to Nick Perls and auctioning Paramount 12750 (V). Klatzko also mentions selling an E copy of Big Boy Cleveland's Gennett 6108 to Perls, and Helge Thygesen of Rudkoebing, Denmark owns a G+ copy.

Sam Collins elicited a bevy of responses: Francis Smith of Ledbury, England reports E- copies of Gennetts 6146 and 6167. Klatzko states that his E Gennett 6291 went to Perls; Roger Misiewicz of Pickering, Canada has Gennett 6181 (G), while Peter Brown of Cheltenham, England owns an E- Black Patti 8025. Paul Garon has Gennett 6146 E- and Richard Metson of Braintree, England lists two Collins—Black Patti 8026 (G/G+) and Gennett 6167 (but a disturbing "G, sealed crack to label"). Sherman Tolen informs us that Joe Bussard has Sam Collins on Black Patti 8026 in E+ condition. By advertising in local newspapers, Mike Schwartzman of Cooperstown, New York unearthed a warped E- "Midnight Special" in 1989, the first Gennett 6307 reported.

Those elusive Jay Bird Cole-



mans also prompted interest. Don Kent notes: "A small update on the fate of Jaybird Coleman Gennett 6245...I sold it to Bob Guida of Flushing, New York...I also have Gennett 6276 in E-/V+, a horribly pitted copy which plays maybe V V+. And you neglected the greatest Jaybird Coleman of all, Silvertone 5192, of which there are at least two copies (*editor's note: Coleman's "Rabbits Foot Williams" pseudonym will appear under "W"*). Kent also writes: "I don't have and never have had the Walter Cole Gennett...the only other copy I know is the Champion issue that Joe Bussard has."

As expected, a fermenting pool of Teddy Darbys (Paramount 12828) finally imploded. Again, Don Kent notes: "I would estimate 15 or more. This was not an uncommon item when I began collecting. I have an E to E- copy purchased from Altshuler in 1979, and I believe both Garon and Bussard have a copy, and Spottswood had a copy in 1963. Stendahl also had a copy, which I think is now in The Perls Collection. I think Koester had a copy, too, and it's one I've seen both on lists and in collections at various times." Roger Misiewicz also claims it G+ ("hc with clicks").

Bernard Klatzko supplies a note on Darby's much rarer Victor 23311: "Besides the one that went to Perls, which you listed, I had another copy...traded in the '70s and Blind Willie Davis, Herwin 93005 V+ (Klatzko collection to Perls), don't you think you should list this record?" Frank Mare of Covington, Georgia has an E- to E copy of the Duckett & Norwood Okeh 8899—a total of three known copies, but one untraced.

The PIANO section elicited a tepid response. Klatzko reports on two Arizona Dranes Okeh 8353 ("E-auctioned in the '70s") and currently owns another ("E from McKune"). Kip Lornell also claims two copies ("one is V to V+ with few small needle digs, the other is E with a 1/4" rim chip"), and Roger Misiewicz owns a V copy. Dave Freeman has the other Dranes piano solo (Okeh 8380, "Crucifixion") N-, as did Terry Zwigoff E- with hc.

As for JUGS/STRINGS—Frank

Mare reports having two rare Cannon's Jug Stompers Victor 38511 "V++" ("Walk Right In") and 23272 E "hr.crk." ("Wolf River"). Martin Bryan of St. Johnsbury, Vermont also claims a V+ copy of 23272. Bernard Klatzko states: "I auctioned (or traded) 23272 and 23262 both E+ in the '70s." Gary Fortine lists 23262 "V+, tight 2" hc—I junked it here in Cincinnati last October." Kip Lornell and Pete Whelan also have the latter (Lornell's is V/E; Whelan's a V to V+ with 3/16" flake. Lornell also reports a V+ copy of Cannon's Victor 38585 ("Germany"), whereas Dave Freeman's N- "Germany" is on Bluebird 5413.

Frank Mare also lists Carolina Peanut Boys Victor 23267 ("V+, Got mine from Joe Bussard, so he's got one too"). Don Kent: "I would estimate more than a dozen copies of Cincinnati Jug Band and the Bob Coleman, though few in great shape (I don't have either, but not for lack of trying)." Both Dave Freeman and Frank Mare report V copies of Bob Coleman Paramount 12731; Roger Misiewicz and Gary Fortine have G copies. And finally, there is the E copy of Daddy Stovepipe's Bluebird 5913 that went from Klatzko to Perls. And Don Kent adds his copy of Dallas Jamboree Jug Band Vocalion 03152 V/E-.

And, in a letter received a few days before closing—Werner Benecke of Kastl, Germany shocks us with this superb C-D listing: (JAZZ) Lou Calabrese Gennett 6421 E; Blanche Calloway Okeh 8279 E+; Eddie Carlew Gennett 6184 E; Cellar Boys Vocalion 1503 N-; Buddy Christian Okeh 8342 E/E+; Sonny Clay Vocalions 1050 E+ and 15641 N-; Ann Cook Victor 20579 N-; Cookie's Gingersnaps Okeh 8369 and 8390 E+; Wallie Coulter Gennett 6369 N-; Chas. Creath Okeh 8477 N-; Genevieve Davis Victor 20648 N-; Charlie Davis Vocalion 15701 E/E+; Harry Dial Vocalion 1515, 1567, and 1594—all E+; and Dodds & Parham Paramounts 12471 N- and 12483 E.

Werner's BLUES/PIANO/JUG listings include: Bob Campbell Vocalion 02830 E+; George Carter Paramount 12769 E; Teddy Darby Paramount 12828 E+ and Victor 23311 E+ Ruth Day Columbia 14642 E; Blind

Clyde Church Victor 23272 E+; Arizona Dranes Okeh 8353 E; Cannon's Jug Stompers Victor 38585 E- and 38611 N-; Carl Davis Vocalion 03092 E/E-; and the Dixie Four Paramount 12661 E+.

## JAZZ

**Eddie And Sugar Lou's Hotel Tyler Orchestra**—K.W.K.H. Blues/Yo Yo Blues—Vocalion 1445—Estimated 15 copies of some of the most raucous territory jazz ever waxed. Dick Spottswood "had it E+," Charles Huber E, Jim Lindsay E-, Dick Raichelson V+ to E-, Bob Fertig and Bill Thompson V+, Paul Riseman V to V+. Howard Berg, Paul Garon, John Sadowsky, and John Steiner report V copies. Russ Shor: "KWKH is on American Brunswick X-1445 for export—one or two copies."

**Eddie And Sugar Lou's Hotel Tyler Orchestra**—There'll Be Some Changes Made/I Never Miss The Sunshine—Vocalion 1455—Estimated at 10. Bob Fertig N-, Jim Lindsay E+, Charles Huber E, Pete Whelan E-. No others reported.

**Eddie And Sugar Lou's Hotel Tyler Orchestra**—Eddie And Sugar Lou Stomp/Sweat Papa Will Be Gone—Vocalion 1514—Estimated at 15. John Steiner E+, John Sadowsky E, Jim Lindsay E-, Gene Miller V+, Bill Thompson V, Pete Whelan V+ (but a hc), (and Spottswood had it E+).

**Eddie And Sugar Lou's Hotel Tyler Orchestra**—Sympathetic Blues/Sorrowful Blues—Vocalion 1714—Five estimated. Bob Fertig N-. No others reported.

**Eddie And Sugar Lou's Hotel Tyler Orchestra**—Cruel Mama Blues/Love Song Blues—Vocalion 1723. Dick Raichelson E+, Charles Huber, John Sadowsky, and John Steiner all E, Jim Lindsay E-. The late Dan Goetter had Vocalion 1714 and 1723 E or better. Dick Raichelson: "(Richard) Hite tells me, he at one time, had every issue of the Eddie & Sugar Lou's."

**Elgar's Creole Orchestra—Café Capers** (E-3840, E-20249)/When Jenny Does Her Low-Down Dance—Vocalion 15477 and Brunswick (German) A-229—Featuring possible cornet by Buddy Bolden's legendary New Orleans rival, Manuel Perez (John Steiner: "Probably not.")—Estimated less than 15. Sherwin Dunner N-, Bob Fertig E+, Tom Tsotsi E, Bill Thompson E-, John Sadowsky, Russ Shor, and Pete Whelan all V+, Charles Huber V. None reported on German Brunswick.

**Elgar's Creole Orchestra—Café Capers** (E-3841, E-20250)/When Jenny Does Her Low-Down Dance (same take)—Vocalion 15477—This seems to be the rarer take of Café Capers—None reported!

**Elgar's Creole Orchestra—Brotherly Love/Nightmare** (E-3837, E-20246)—Vocalion 15478. Estimated less than 15 (More common on Brunswick. The rare take of "Nightmare" is on Vocalion.) Bob Fertig E+, Bob Hilbert E to E+, Paul Riseman E, Pete Whelan E, Tom Tsotsi E-, Bill Thompson V+, and Spottswood had it E or better (John Steiner reports a N- copy of the Brunswick, and Paul Garon has it V+).

**Edgewater Crows—No Bonus Blues/Swinging Rhythm Around**—ARC 7-01-621. (1930s regional jazz.) Mysteriously absent from Rust's Jazz Records. Estimated 10 copies. Charles Huber N, Bob Fertig N-, Tom Tsotsi: "had two copies—kept E+ copy—sold E copy to Len Chiacchia," Russ Shor E+, Pete Whelan E. Don Kent: "I think you overestimate the rarity of this item—more likely it seems something that you had previously overlooked. I saw several copies in the '60s, when items like this turned up with mild frequency...Jake had a couple of copies...Gee, I got this." And Spottswood had a clean copy.

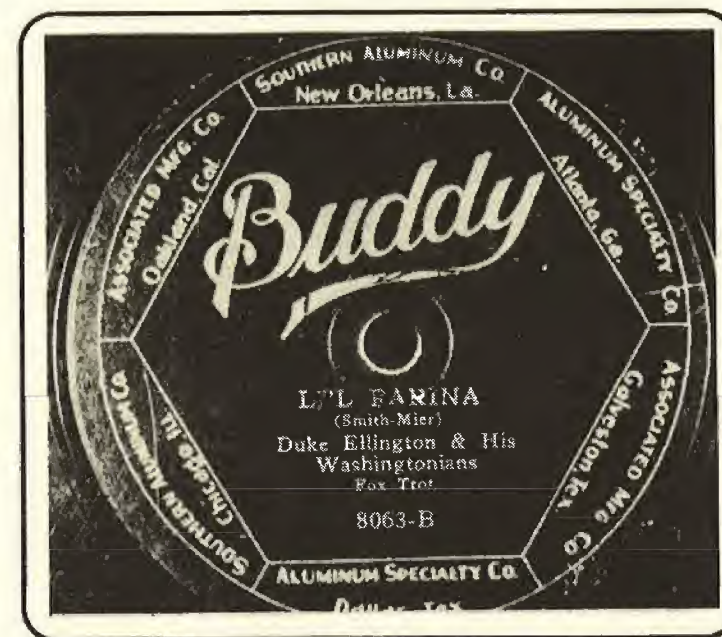
**Fred Elizalde's Cinderella Roof Orchestra**—That Certain Feeling/Boneyard Shuffle—Hollywood 1012—Perhaps two or three copies. Dick Raichelson writes: "The source for the one I used on Arcadia 2002 came from Don Brown. Hite got the one which was on the Steve LaVere auction. I think it was V+ with a small hair crk."

**Fred Elizalde's Cinderella Roof Orchestra**—How Many Times/Melancholy Weeps—Hollywood 1013—Possibly two or three. None reported.

**Fred Elizalde's Cinderella Roof Orchestra**—Out Of My Dreams/Tonight's My Night With Baby—Hollywood 1014—No more than three. None reported.

**Fred Elizalde's Cinderella Roof Orchestra**—Siam Blues/Tickling Julie—Hollywood 1015—Again, two or three copies on this rare West Coast label, but none reported. (Dan Goetter had all four Elizalde Hollywoods—conditions unknown).

We are indebted to Jerry Valburn and Steven Lasker for all the information in the next grouping of Duke Ellingtons (under "E"). Jerry Valburn writes: "...I'm afraid that the content shown here will cause you to re-write and restructure your pages. Further, I decided to consult with Steven Lasker on the 'Ellington Project.' Steven has been deeply involved in Duke research for a



from the collection of JERRY VALBURN

ELLINGTON ON BUDDY  
(only one copy reported)

forthcoming book covering the beginning through the recording ban of 1942. He also has a superb Ellington collection of originals and is 'up' on what items are really scarce. (He has) a very good approximation of both value and a realistic idea of how many copies have survived. Here are our findings, and I sincerely hope you will consider using all of this in the magazine."

And from Steven Lasker: "...concerning the rarest recordings issued under Duke's name (which qualification excludes the Blu-Discs and Up-To-Date; the various obscure B, D, & M labels; the Six Jolly Jesters' Vocalion 15843—both takes A & B are available on this rare issue; certain scarce takes on Velvetone; certain Pathés; Duke's U.S. Odeons and Parlophones—which are original issues; etc., etc. Come to think of the last mentioned, 78 *Quarterly No.3* neglected to list two super rare Duke items—Parlophones PNY 34156 and 34166, issued as 'Frank Brown and His Tooters'—of which there can't be more than a half dozen or so surviving copies of each)..."

**Duke Ellington's Washingtonians**—Georgia Grind/Parlor Social Stomp—"bloodshot" Pathé 7504—(Steven Lasker and Jerry Valburn estimate 12 and 15 respectively). Ken

Crawford E, Jerry Valburn V+, Steven Lasker G with digs; Perfect 104—(Valburn and Lasker estimate 40 and 45)—Charles Huber N, Jerry Valburn N, Bob Fertig E+ (Spottswood had it E+), Stevan Lasker E-, Dick Raichelson E-/V+, Grant Cairns and Jim Lindsay V+, and John Steiner V.

**Duke Ellington's Washingtonians**—I'm "Gonna" Hang Around My Sugar/Trombone Blues—Pathé 36333 (Lasker and Valburn estimate 20 and 15, respectively), Jerry Valburn V, Steven Lasker VV-; Perfect 14514 (Valburn and Lasker estimate 40 and 80). Jerry Valburn N, Steven Lasker E; Challenge 803 (first title only—Lasker and Valburn estimate five). Jerry Valburn E.

**Duke Ellington And His Orchestra**—(You've Got Those) Wanna-Go-Back-Again Blues/If You Can't Hold The Man You Love—Buddy 8010—(Lasker and Valburn estimate less than five). None reported. Ken Crawford: "(I) Have Gennett 3291 E+." Steven Lasker: "The two Ellington Gennetts are pretty common (maybe 80-100 copies each), though the Alberta Jones ('acc. by the Ellington Twins') is somewhat scarcer—perhaps 25 copies on Gennett."

**Duke Ellington And His Washingtonians**—Animal Crackers/Li'l Fa-



rina—Buddy 8063. (Valburn and Lasker estimate five.) Grant Cairns E-, Jerry Valburn V; Challenge 135. John Sadowsky: "I've got it as 'Memphis Bell Hops' V+." Lasker: "I'll estimate 15 copies of Challenge 134 ('L'il Farina') and 135 ('Animal Crackers'). Not particularly desirable items to my taste, though."

**Duke Ellington And His Kentucky Club Orchestra**—East St. Louis Toodle-O (sic) (E-4110)/Birmingham Breakdown (E-4114)—Vocalion 1064. According to Rust, the 1926 first master, a large-labeled Vocalion, spells it "Toodle-O"; the more common 1927 (small-labeled) version spells it "Toodle-oo" (yet, the few small-label copies reported to 78 Quarterly read: "Toodle-O"). Jerry Valburn N, Ken Crawford E, Steven Lasker E, Don Kent E(?), Spottswood had it E or better, Bob Fertig E-, Charles Huber E-, Bob Hilbert V to V+, Dick Raichelson V, and Grant Cairns V- who has "both small and large labels with 'O'." Russ Shor: "Mine, which is a small-label, has the 1926 version of 'Birmingham' backed by the 1927 version of 'East St. Louis.'" Jerry Valburn (who has Vocalion 1064 new in "all combinations") writes: "On the later small-label pressings—the first pressing, 'East St. Louis,' comes only from Vocalion—on the second pressing, both sides are from Brunswick masters." Steven Lasker: "I estimate 60-70 large-label copies of Vocalion 1064. This was pressed at the plants at Muskegon and L.A."

**Duke Ellington And His Kentucky Club Orchestra**—Immigration Blues/The Creeper (E-4323)—Vocalion 1077. (Valburn and Lasker estimate less than 40; Lasker: "...I estimate 30 small label copies (I know of a half-dozen or so) and maybe eight large-label copies (of which I've seen only two). Vocalion 1077 was also pressed at both plants; Muskegon pressings have small labels and show the two digits in the wax (and contain The Creeper mx. E4323W), while L.A. pressings have large labels (and contain The Creeper mx. E4324W), but no take data in the wax." Charles Huber N-, Jim Lindsay and John Steiner E, Ken Crawford E-, Russ Shor E-(?), Steven Lasker E-/V, Grant Cairns V (Whelan had it E-); Oriole (English) 1010—Lasker and Valburn estimate five. Spottswood reports having had it E or better. Raichelson: "I think Dave Goldenberg also has this"; Immigration Blues/The Creeper (E-4324W)—Vocalion 1077. This is the Los Angeles pressing—Lasker and Valburn estimate only 10 copies. Jerry Valburn N ("originally in the John Baker collection").

**Duke Ellington And His Kentucky Club Orchestra**—New Orleans Low-

Down/Song Of The Cotton Field—Vocalion 1086. Valburn and Lasker estimate less than 25. Jerry Valburn N, Charles Huber N-, Ken Crawford E-, John Steiner V. Steven Lasker: "L.A. (large label) and Muskegon (small label) pressings of Vocalion 1086 were made. Mine is small label, E+."

**Duke Ellington And His Kentucky Club Orchestra**—Doing The Frog/Red Hot Band—Vocalion 1153. Jim Lindsay N-, who reports: "...it's as rare or rarer than the other Vocalions, and I thought you might have forgot about it." Jerry Valburn N ("got mine from Jake"). Ken Crawford has it E and says: "...I estimate six copies." Charles Huber V+. Steven Lasker: "In my opinion Vocalion 1153 (My copy is EE+) isn't nearly as rare...I estimate 40 copies."

**Duke Ellington And His Cotton Club Orchestra**—Black Beauty/Jubilee Stomp—Vocalion 15710. Steven Lasker writes: "Black Beauty, E27093, was issued only on L.A.-error pressings of Brunswick 4044, labeled as 'Don't Mess Around With Me' by 'The Hotsy Totsy Gang.' This latter title was intended, but Ellington's E27093 was substituted in error. 'Don't Mess Around With Me' was mx. E27903; hence, the confusion (my copy of the error pressing is VV+). I estimate 40 copies (of the Brunswick)...Jubilee Stomp' from the same session was originally issued on Vo 15710, not Br 4044 as shown in discographies. I estimate 70 copies of Vo 15710..." Charles Huber N-, Steven Lasker N- (Jerry Valburn has Vocalion 15710 E, Brunswick 4044 N, and the error pressing E+).

Steven Lasker: "Some copies of Brunswick 6093 pair Pt. 1 of Ellington's 'Creole Rhapsody' with an otherwise unissued (on 78) version of Frank Trumbauer's 'Honeysuckle Rose.' The Trumbauer side is labelled as 'Creole Rhapsody-Part 2' by The Jungle Band. Perhaps 20 copies survive."

**(Duke Ellington)**—A Souvenir Of Duke Ellington's First Visit to England 1933/(one-sided)—Oriole (English) un-numbered. Jerry Valburn: "This single-sided pressing was a gift to record purchasers buying six or more Ellington records at Levy's Record Shop in London. Both Lasker and I believe that approximately 50 copies are still in existence (including the one's in our collections)." Ken Crawford N-, Steven Lasker N-, John Steiner N-, Jerry Valburn N- and Bob Hilbert E+.

**Orchestra (sic)**—Jubilee Stomp/(Orchestra—Sugar [Bennie Moten])—Victor X-16189. Steven Lasker: "It is part of an obscure series pressed by Victor for export (possibly to Mexico?)."

**Orchestra (sic)**—Jubilee Stomp/Jubilee Stomp—Victor 0296. Steven Lasker writes: "0296 contains Jubilee Stomp on both sides (78 rpm), and is part of the Victor 'PICT-UR MUSIC' (theater use) series. The artist credit on both these 1928 releases is anonymous—to *Orchestra*, no more, no less....I don't know of any copies of either issue."

Valburn notes: "Among the rarest of recordings under Duke Ellington's name are the THEATRE USE RECORDINGS made in late 1932 and 1933 by Victor and the American Record Company (ARC). The Victor items were made at both 78 and 33 1/3 rpm; the only ARC Ellington item is found at 33 1/3. Victor uses a LT prefix for 33 1/3 rpm and a T prefix for 78. E is the prefix for ARC 33 1/3 and F was the prefix for 78 rpm (not used here). We (Valburn and Lasker) would estimate that under five copies of any of these items has survived. In my own collection I own only Victor LT 12 and a test pressing of ARC E 751." From recent Lasker/Valburn research come these details:

"Victor (Theater Use Recordings): LT 9 & T 9—Mississippi (Sept. 16, 1929/BVE 55845-2)—released Oct. '32; LT 10 & T 10—Flaming Youth (Jan. 16, 1929/BVE 49652-2)—released Oct. '32; LT 11 & T 11—Blue Bubbles (Dec. 19, 1927/BVE 41246-1)—released Oct. '32; LT 12 (Valburn has this E+) & T 12—Mood Indigo (Dec. 10, 1930/BVE 64811-4)—released Oct. '32; LT 61 & T 61—Jungle Nights In Harlem (June 4, 1930/BVE 62193-2)—released Nov. '32; LT 62 & T 62—Double Check Stomp (April 11, 1930/BVE 59692-2)—released Nov. '32; LT 63 & T 63—Brown Berries (Dec. 19, 1927/BVE 41244-1)—released Nov. '32."

**American Record Company (Theater Use Recordings):** E 751 Sophisticated Lady/Sophisticated Lady (May 16, 1933/B-13338-A) (Jerry Valburn has a new test pressing).

"In the same 'category' the Victor Long Playing Record L-16006 *Take #3* is extremely rare..." Lasker and Valburn estimate eight and 10 copies respectively. Valburn E+, Lasker: "(Mine) looks E, but plays V due to steel needle damage."

Steven Lasker: "BrF/G A 9331 (perhaps 40-50 copies total) pairs a title not issued in the U.S., 'Stars,' with 'Swing Low'...You really ought to list Columbia 36279, which contains 'Prelude To A Kiss-2' on a very few copies. And don't laugh too hastily: I'm aware of only a single copy, held by a collector in Belgium. I know Jerry would love to have a copy, as would I."

**Fay Elliott's New Yorkers**—Come Easy Go Easy Love/(unknown)—



from the collection of JERRY VALBURN

ONLY ONE COPY REPORTED

Flexo 1640. Robert Crumb: "A very hot jazz record. I have no idea how many copies. I know of one other besides mine, in the hands of one of the original band members in San Francisco."

**Sharlie English (sic)**—Tuba Lawdy Blues/(Transom Blues)—Paramount 12610—Featuring orgastic tuba solos by the fourth Cobb brother, Bert. John Steiner N, Sherwin Dunner and Pete Whelan E+, Bill Thompson E, Kip Lornell G+ to V-. Raichelson: "Bob Vinisky has this in G." Huber: "I had it E."

**Equinox Orchestra Of Princeton, New Jersey**—China Boy/That's A Plenty—Columbia (personal) 115-P—Estimated about 10 copies. John Steiner E and Pete Whelan (E- with audible lam crk). There are other copies out there.

**Wally Erickson's Coliseum Orchestra**—I Get The Blues When It Rains/Hard Luck—Vocalion 15778—Another one of those tough Vocalions on late 15,000 series. We estimate five or less (an E+ copy was offered in a 1989 *Jostin's Jazz Journal*). Keith Miller E+, Sherwin Dunner: "I had a N- copy. Disposed of it in 1988." Robert Crumb: "E with heat damage 1/2-inch into grooves—got from 'Uncle Alty' (Altshuler)."

**Erwing Brothers' Orchestra**—The Erwing Blues/Rhythm—Vocalion 2564. Dick Raichelson: "The copy which I used for Arcadia came from Carl Kenziora. There's one or two in California. This thing is very rare and good." Russ Shor (who lists an E copy): "Vocalions sold for 19¢ to juke box distributors; the stuff that didn't was rare." Doug Seroff had a V/V+ copy in his last (1989) auction.

**Lottie Everson** (Lottie Kimbrough)—Blue World Blues/(Rolling Log Blues)—Champion 15636. Could the trumpet (not cornet as listed in R) really be Tommy Ladnier after all? Tom Tsotsi: "No! No! No! Where and why did this gross misconception start? I believe it can be attributed to Gene Williams in 1940, when he was reviewing Eli Oberstein's Varsity 6000 series reissues (in *Jazz Information*). I suspect that he and his colleagues heard Clara's aside near the end of the 16-bar and 8-bar trumpet solo on Mx 14158 as: 'Play that thing Mr. Ladnier'—whereas what she exhorts is 'Mr. Laddie.'...It's incongruous to place Ladnier in Richmond for two acc. sides within an eight-side session of blues artists from Kansas City!"

And from European jazz authority Hal Flakser these final comments should put the matter to

rest... "the answer is NO. Tommy was still with ol' man Sam Wooding's Orch. at that time (August 21, 1928), having arrived in Germany—their second European sojourn—about June, 11, 1928. Sam was touring Germany...roughly, two and a half to three months...From Germany the Orchestra moved on to Vienna in September, 1928, where they played the Moulin Rouge (not to be confused with the more well-known Paris venue)...after Vienna, in October, they performed in Bucharest for two weeks, and then, on to Istanbul..."

Two Champions of "Blue World Blues" reported: Pete Whelan V+ (in a 1956 trade from Charles Huber, who canvassed it in Farmville, VA) and Gayle Wardlow V-. A Gennett test (E) on a blank white label, pressed by Harry Gennett in the 1940s (?), also exists. Using a blue ball-point pen in 1957, Jake Schneider titled it: "Just Wandering Around In This Old Blue World."

**Will Ezell**—Just Can't Stay Here (15649-A)/Pitchin' Boogie—Paramount 12855. Apparently, this odd take was never reissued. Estimated less than five of this take. John Steiner N. No others reported.

**Will Ezell**—Hot Spot Stuff/Freakish Mistreater Blues—Paramount 12914—On target and punchy, the driving cornet on side one by the obscure Baby Jay (?) makes it a great jazz collectible. Estimated less than 10. Pete Whelan E+, Terry Zwiggoff E+, Charles Huber E-, Spottswood V to V+ (and there was Pete Kaufman's E+ copy, possibly in the Perls collection).

**Carl Fenton And His Orchestra**—St. James Infirmary/Shake It Down—QRS Q-1023. One of the very few jazz items on the rare (Cova-produced) red-label QRS. Estimated less than five. Raichelson: "Keith Miller has a clean copy." Sherwin Dunner: "I never had this particular record, but a collector out here has a Cova picture record à la the VOGUE idea...a clear laminated pressing over color art work—in this case both sides have cigarette ads, I believe, looking much like the color ads appearing in the more sophisticated mags of the period. On one side is Carl Fenton's 'Shake It Down'...on the other side is Bennie Nawahi's 'Singin' In The Bathtub,' a great, hot Hawaiian record! Do you know of any other examples of this experimental COVA picture record?"

**Douglas Finnell And His Royal Stompers**—The Right String But the Wrong Yo Yo/Sweet Sweet Mama—Brunswick 7123. Estimated 10 or more. Bill Thompson N-, Sherwin Dunner E+, Robert Crumb and John Sadowsky E, Dick Spottswood V+, and Charles Huber V.





February 24, 1931—One copy reported

**Deacon Foster And His Boys** (Alphonse Trent)—Gilded Kisses/Black And Blue Rhapsody—Champion 15656. One reported. John Sadowsky: "Jim Lindsay has Gilded Kisses/Black & Blue about E-." Apparently, these sides show up more often on Gennett.

**Evelyn Foster** (Clara Herring)—Park No More Mama Blues/(Ruby Gowdy pseudonym unknown—Moanful Wailin' Blues)—Champion 15569—Same trumpet as the Kimbrough, but no known copies on Champion (or Gennett).

**Evelyn Foster** (Clara Herring)—Beating Blues/(Mae Rogers—Road House Blues)—Champion 15590. Once again, the astonishing trumpet. Pete Whelan V/G. No others reported.

**Frankie Franko And His Louisianians**—Somebody Stole My Gal/Golden Lily Blues—Melotone M-12009. Well-documented and perhaps the most sought after Punch Miller item. Grant Cairns, Ken Crawford, Bob Hilbert, Keith Miller, and John Sadowsky report E+ copies. Bob Fertig, Dick Raichelson, Sherman Tolen, and Pete Whelan have it V+ (Spottswood had it E+). Polk P-9030—No known copies.

**Frenchy's String Band**—Texas And

Pacific Blues/Sunshine Special—Columbia 14337—Frank Driggs verified that New Orleansian Polite Christian and not LeRoy Williams is the masterful trumpet. (Sam Charters once remarked: "He sounds like contemporaries' descriptions of Buddy Petit's playing.") The late James McKune had three N/E+ copies, but surprisingly rare for a mid-14,000s Columbia. Estimated about 10. Raichelson: "I think there are more than 10 copies, perhaps 25 or 50-plus. Nevertheless, it has always been a very desirable record." Bob Fertig N, Charles Huber N ("I turned up five or six copies"), Sherwin Dunner E+ ("I had one other E+ copy and one E-"), Bill Thompson and Pete Whelan E+, Paul Garon and Jim Lindsay E, Russ Shor E-, John Sadowsky ("E but badly warped"), Howard Berg, Peter Bradford, and Robert Crumb all V+, Grant Cairns V (and Spottswood's former E+ copy).

**Galveston Serenaders** (Vicksburg Blowers)—Twin Blues/(unknown)—Champion 15266—Estimated less than five. None reported.

**Galveston Serenaders** (Vicksburg Blowers)—Monte Carlo Joys/(unknown)—Champion 15288—Estimated less than five. None reported. Charles Huber: "I had it years ago."

**Tom Gates & His Orch.** (sic)—The Bucket's Got A Hole In It/(Eddie Carlew's Baby Aristocrats (sic)—Indiana Mud)—Gennett 6184—Estimated about five. Bob Fertig N, John Sadowsky E-, Robert Crumb V+, Pete Whelan V+ (with inaud. hr crk.), Tom Tsotsi: "had beat-up copy (G-)," and Bill Thompson "F (heat damage)." Raichelson: "Paul Burgess had this." And Tom Tsotsi supplies the following information:

**Tom Gates Orch** (sic)—The Bucket's Got A Hole In It/(King Porter & His Orch. [sic] (George Matthews Carolina Night Hawks)—Champion 15305. One copy reported: Tom Tsotsi V/V+.

**Tom Gates & His Orch.**—Wabash Blues/(Baby Aristocrats Band—Darktown Shuffle)—Gennett 6198. Jim Lindsay, who has a N- copy: "Another rare one you could include on your list...both sides are great", Dick Spottswood (?).

**The Get Happy Band**—Junk Bucket Blues/Harlem's Araby—Columbia 14091. The early 14,000 series is usually not considered rare, still it's a difficult Bechet item. Estimated less than 10. Russ Shor: "Marvin Elias junked it N- in a dealer's stock." Bill Thompson E+, Bob Fertig E-, John Sadowsky E-, and Sherman Tolen E-, and Charles Huber V+.

**The Get Happy Band**—Puddin' Papa/On The Puppy's Tail—Columbia 14099. These torrid performers seem more inspired when they get out from under Bechet's dominance. Ken Crawford N-, Bob Fertig and Pete Whelan E+, Tom Tsotsi E-, Charles Huber V+, Dick Raichelson V/V+, Bill Thompson V, Russ Shor V- "had three copies all less than V").

**Joseph Gish And His Orchestra**—Milenberg Joys/You Are Just A Vision—New Flexo 311—The only copy we know of belonged to Dick Spottswood (E- ?).

**Mae Glover**—My Man Blues/Skeeter Blues—Champion 16238. James Parker's trumpet puts it into the rare jazz category. Pete Whelan E/E-. No others reported.

**Mae Glover**—The Country Farm Blues/Hoboken Prison Blues—Champion 16268. More James Parker trumpet. Whelan E-/E. No others reported.

**Mae Glover**—Forty-Four Blues/(Grasshopper Papa)—Champion 16351. Parker on side one. Two reported. Don Kent: "My E+ copy came from Doug Jystrup before he sold his collection to Garon. When, after four months, no package was forthcoming, I sent a postcard: 'Where's Mae Glover?' Received an answer: 'In Heaven.' Too much Ring Lardner." And Whelan V to V+.

**Golden Melody Men** (Preston

Jackson And His Uptown Band)—Trombone Man/(reverse no jazz interest)—Challenge 803. Probably more than five, but most are V. Russ Shor V+. Charles Huber: "Had a couple."

**Golden Melody Men** (Preston Jackson And His Uptown Band)—Yearning For Mandalay/(reverse no jazz interest)—Challenge 805. Not listed in Rust. One copy reported (Pete Whelan E).

**Ernie Golden & His Orch.** (sic)—Dirty Hot/(Red Perkins & His Dixie Ramblers—My Baby Knows How)—Champion 16661—It is "dirty hot" and two reported copies: Jim Lindsay and Pete Whelan E+.

**Jean Goldkette And His Orchestra**—In My Merry Oldsmobile (38268-1)/(In My Merry Oldsmobile—waltz, without Bix)—Victor Special (un-numbered). Steven Lasker: "Are you aware that it went through at least two different pressings? Some copies I've seen bear the slug Victor Talking Machine Co. at the bottom of the label, while others show RCA Victor Company, Inc." Ken Crawford: "Never considered this a really rare item. I have had three copies over the years (none now), and have seen it numerous times in auctions, in the past 35 years. As a rough guess, I would have to say, probably 100 copies exist. Bill Thompson told me, that, as a dealer for many years, he has come across many thousands of records, and to him, Goldkette's 'Proud Of A Baby Like You'—Victor 20469, is rarer than 'Oldsmobile.' 'Proud' is a tough one!...I would not think of either record as really rare." Dick Raichelson: "...To me, Goldkette's 'Proud Of A Baby Like You'—Victor 20469 (4)—is rarer than the Victor Special. Its sales were limited regionally (my copy is E-), but the Special was given away by Oldsmobile dealerships..." John Steiner N, Grant Cairns E+, Bob Fertig E+, Bob Hilbert E to E+, Dick Raichelson E, and Ross Witley E-. Howard Berg: "I just sold an E- copy. Altshuler had two copies." Bob Hilbert: "Bill Thompson, I believe, has one that has Victor Talking Machine on one side and RCA on the other!...I assume it was given out by car dealerships, but did you have to buy an Olds to get one?"

**Benny Goodman's Boys With Jim And Glenn**—A Jazz Holiday/Wolverine Blues—Vocalion 15656—Estimated less than 10 copies. A "clean copy" offered in a recent auction went for over \$500. Ken Crawford N-, Bob Hilbert E, Jim Lindsay V+, Bill Thompson V+ (cracked), and Grant Cairns V.

**Benny Goodman**—Clarinetitis/That's A Plenty—Vocalion 15705. Estimated less than 10. Other labels were later reissues (it shows up more

often on Melotone, but that was issued almost three years later). Ken Crawford E+, Grant Cairns E, Dick Raichelson E+/E with 1/2" inaudible hair crk., and Pete Whelan V-.

**Benny Goodman And His Orchestra**—Pop-Corn Man/(?)—Victor 25808. More of a "downer" than a "sizzler," this trite affair was quickly withdrawn because of an imagined public outcry to its "risqué" (?) lyrics. Ken Crawford: "Pop-Corn Man"—reverse is 'Always And Always', both on Victor 25808. After a few were pressed, 'Pop-Corn Man' was withdrawn for some reason—(nobody really knows why) and the same number—25808, received a new backing of 'Oooooh-Oh Boom,' so, the common coupling of 25808 is 'Always And Always/Oooooh-Oh Boom'. I know of five copies." Grant Cairns reports two copies—both N, Ken Crawford N-. Dick Raichelson: "(Richard) Hite had one and sold it." Tom Tsotsi: "This is an over-rated 'rare' record. Rumor has it that a collector in Buffalo snagged a box of 25 to beat the recall. The reason for its 'rarity'? Every Goodman collector wants to have a copy (it's a badge of merit with these guys)—and...there are so many BG collectors...and probably dozens (of records) extant."

**Gowan's Rhapsody Makers**—Sunny Hawaii/I'm Looking Over A Four-Leaf Clover—Gennett 6039. Estimated between five and 10. Jim Lindsay E+, Sherwin Dunner E, and Bob Fertig V+. Dick Raichelson: "My copy is E-. Keith Miller junked one a couple years ago in the South. Jim Williams purchased a copy in a collection he bought out of Minneapolis...and I got my copy in San Francisco, c. 1965-6. On Saturdays, collectors used to gather in the Salvation Army to talk and check out the stock. A friend came in and said he saw an odd-looking label at the Good Will about a mile down the road. 'The label was black,' he said. 'I think it said Gennett' (he collected personalities and wasn't familiar with Electrobeams). I said, 'Let's Go.' We drove to the store, to say the least, at a fast pace. We walked into the room where the records were. I saw this black label sticking out of a greeting card rack, lined up with other types of records. Getting closer, I saw it was a Gennett and grabbed it. The Gowan was the only decent record in the lot..." John Sadowsky: "I've got it on Champion 15216 V+ as Fred Sharp."

Ken Crawford writes: "Gowan's Rhapsody Makers—I'll Fly To Hawaii/(reverse different group—no interest)—Gennett 3408. Estimate the same as Gennett 6039 (five to 10 copies). Mine E+...I had the Gennett 6039 years before finding Gennett 3408. I have since traded 6039, but

kept 3408, as I prefer it." Robert Crumb: "Is this record (3408) rare? I know of three other copies, two of them Champion issues (Zwigoff, Sherwin Dunner, Tom Bertino)."

**Ruby Gowdy**—Moanful Wailin' Blues/(Slim Johnson—If Mama Has Outside Lovin')—Gennett 6570. (Instrumental acc. by possible Horsey's Hot Five contingent.) Estimated two or three. One reported (Pete Whelan), but a rather grim G.

**Ruby Gowdy**—Moanful Wailin' Blues/(Evelyn Foster—Park No More Mama)—Champion 15569. None reported.

**Ruby Gowdy** (acc. by Horsey's Hot Five ?)—Florida Flood Blues/Breath And Britches Blues—Gennett 6708. None reported.

**Ruby Gowdy**—Florida Flood Blues/(Bessie Saunders—Wild Geese Blues)—Champion 15613. Estimated less than five.

**Ruby Gowdy**—Breath And Britches Blues/(Bessie Saunders—Red Beans And Rice)—Champion 15635. Estimated less than five. No Champions reported. Pseudonyms on Conqueror 7265 are unknown, and none reported.

**Russell Gray And His Orchestra** (Frankie Trumbauer And His Orchestra)—Sugar/(reverse unlisted in Rust)—Okeh 40938. John Sadowsky: "The flip is by 'The Texans,' the title 'Did You Mean It' (no jazz interest)." Estimated less than 15. Bob Fertig N, Charles Huber N, Ken Crawford N-, John Sadowsky E, Grant Cairns E-, and Bill Thompson V+.

**Green Parrot Inn Orchestra** (Eddie Miles And His Florentine Club Orchestra)—At Sundown/(unknown)—Champion 15322. Estimated less than five of this Alabama band (not well-documented). Bob Fertig E+, Dick Raichelson: "My copy is E, but this record is not very good. Nor is 'Give Me A Night In June.' 'Is It Possible' has some good, hot solos."

**Green Parrot Inn Orchestra** (Eddie Miles And His Florentine Club Orchestra)—One O'Clock Baby/(Dave Lawson's Orchestra—Me And My Shadow)—Champion 15326. Estimated less than five. Bob Fertig E-. (One O'Clock Baby also on Silver-tone 5109 with unknown pseudonym.)

**Green Parrot Inn Orchestra** (Eddie Miles And His Florentine Club Orchestra)—Give Me A Night In June/Is It Possible?—Champion 15345; Silver-tone 5108. Estimated less than five of each. Charles Huber V.

**Marie Grinter** (acc. by The State Street Ramblers)—Road House Blues/Do Right Blues—Gennett 6551. Two (maybe three) copies. John Steiner: "(I have) Gennett 6551—only F or P." Tom Tsotsi: "I have a



tape from Europe, both sides, so (another) copy extant." Charles Huber: "I canvassed it 1957 and traded it to you (Whelan)." Whelan: "It must have been someone else or on Champion 15590 (as 'Mae Rodgers')." "

**Marie Grinter** (acc. by The State Street Ramblers)—St. Louis Man/ (Charleston Blues)—Gennett 6738. No known copies and none reported.

**Frank Guarente's World Known Georgians**—Georgians Blues/Lonely Acres—Kalophone (Swiss) 401/402. Aside from their rarity and a certain mystique, we don't know if this and the next four numbers are really "hot jazz." Estimated or known copies? Hal Flakser: "I did have all three issues in virtually MINT condition. Incredibly rare!!! And, they're musically excellent, too. My original three discs now 'reside' on one of the shelves of the IJS, as part of their permanent collection. Frank Guarente's Georgians broke up sometime during the first-half of January, 1927, when Frank was offered the first trumpet chair with the (British) Savoy Orpheans in London. Guarente cut over 130 sides with this Orch. for HMV in 1927." Russ Shor: "... (9 1/2-inch records) issued as a 3-record album. 'Georgians Blues' is the best side. 'Valencia' is a washout. Joop Goudswaard of Rotterdam had three sets."

**Frank Guarente's World Known Georgians**—Hard-To-Get Gentle/Boneyard Shuffle—Kalophone (Swiss) 403/404. Estimated less than 10.

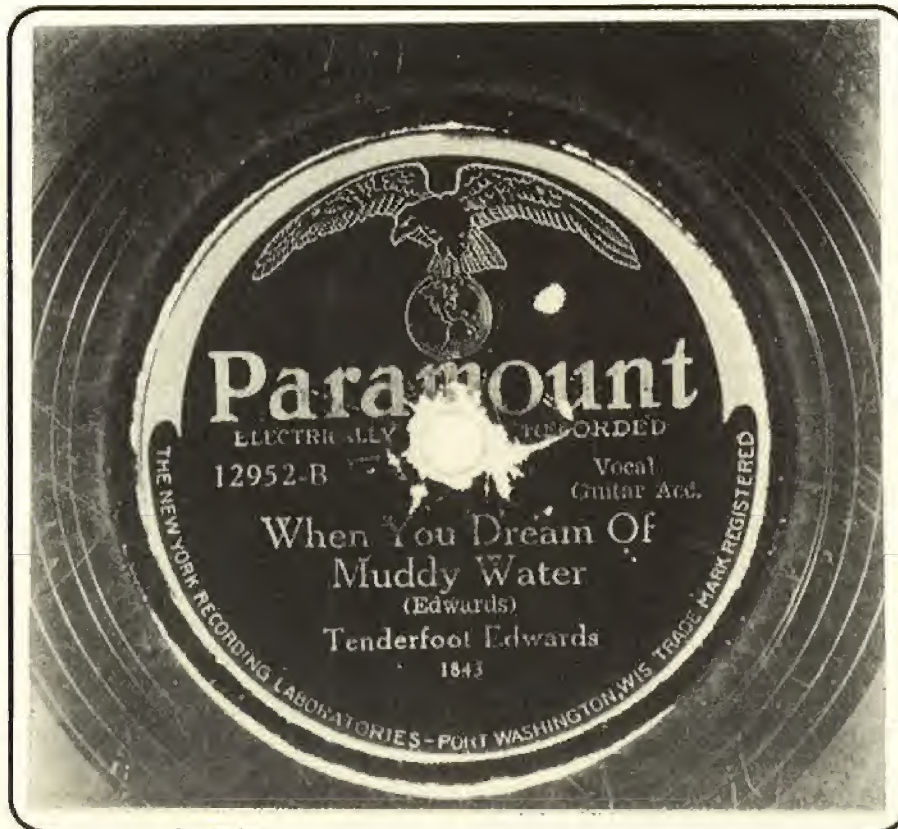
**Frank Guarente's World Known Georgians**—Lonesome And Sorry/Valencia—Kalophone (Swiss) 405/406. Estimated less than 10.

## "COUNTRY BLUES"

**Eddy Teddy**—Wild Woman Blues/Alcohol Mama—Brunswick 7223. Estimated less than five. Klatzko: "Don Kent has a N copy (from Decca vaults)."

**Teddy Edwards**—I Ain't Gonna Give You None/Lovin' Blues—Polk 9008. Don Kent: "One E- copy known on Polk 9008."

**Teddy Edwards**—Them Things/Family Troubles—Polk 9009. No copies reported on Polk. Russ Shor: "He's...ludicrously bad..."



TWO COPIES REPORTED

**Tenderfoot Edwards**—Florida Bound/Seven Sisters Blues—Paramount 12873—Five to 10 copies. Francis Smith E+ (Whelan's former E+ copy resides in The Perls Collection), Robert Crumb: "E- with small crack—from Nick Perls, in trade for album cover art. Perls' duplicate pile was a magnificent blues collection in itself—stacks of Paramounts—a dozen Charlie Patton's, a foot-long row of Blind Lemons, endless Vocalions and Victors—it took my breath away to have access to these treasures in exchange for my pitiful drawings..." Kip Lornell G to G+.

**Tenderfoot Edwards**—Up On The Hill Blues/When You Dream Of Muddy Water—Paramount 12952. Two known copies of a strange and magnetic country blues performance (*Muddy Water*). Gayle Wardlow's Paramount has a "Big Mac" rim bite. Pete Whelan's is V-.

**John Estes**—The Girl I Love, She Got Long Curly Hair/Divin' Duck Blues—Victor 38549. Estimated about five copies. Gayle Wardlow N, Robert Crumb: "...in trade from Terry Zwigoff—it was a duplicate of his E copy." Kip Lornell E, Bill Thompson E-, Paul Garon V+, and Dick Spottswood had it E. Don Kent: "...the most common Victor and did turn up with

some frequency in the '60s. I can think of at least five copies, so I'd estimate about 10..."

**John Estes**—Black Mattie Blues/Broken-Hearted, Ragged And Dirty Too—Victor 38582. Estimated about five copies. Gayle Wardlow E, Bill Thompson E-, Ron Brown and Paul Garon V. Kent: "Very scarce, five is about right."

**John Estes**—James Rachel—Little Sarah/T-Bone Steak Blues—Victor 38595. Gayle Wardlow N-, Don Kent E, Dick Raichelson E/E-, Frank Mare E-, Sherman Tolen V to V-, Paul Garon V- to G. Bernard Klatzko offered an E+ copy in 78 *Quarterly's* Issue No. 4. (Spottswood: "This might've been my old copy.") Possibly two or three others.

**John Estes**—Milk Cow Blues/Street Car Blues—Victor 38614. Don Kent: "I have an E+ copy from Matt Winter, who got it from Altschuler, who got it God knows where?" An E+ copy also went from Whelan to the late James McKune to Ben Kaplin. About two or three others.

**John Estes**—Whatcha Doin'/?/Poor John Blues—Victor 38628. Possibly as many as five copies. Don Kent N, Howard Berg E, and Gayle Wardlow E-(Mike Stewart's copy is ? condition).

**John Estes**—Expressmen Blues/Sweet Mama—Victor 23318. Two copies? Harry Smith's E+ copy was reissued by Folkways and is now untraced. Spottswood: "Harry Smith's collection (was) donated to the New York Public Library." Don Kent: "One copy was offered in the late '60s. N-/E+."

**John Estes**—Stack O' Dollars/My Black Gal Blues—Victor 23397. Don Kent: "There are two known copies of Victor 23397, both were the property of Paul Garon, both looked about V-, and I have the one that plays a little less." Paul Garon reports his as V+.

**Joe Evans**—New Huntsville Jail/(Two Poor Boys—John Henry Blues)—Oriole 8080, Perfect 181, Romeo 8080. Estimated less than five on each ARC label. Robert Crumb reports having an unlisted copy on Conqueror (7876)—"a V copy in a used magazine store in San José." Don Kent: "I don't believe I've ever seen a copy of 'John Henry' on Oriole or Romeo, but, again, I canvassed at least three copies, and it seems to be in most collections south of the Mason-Dixon line. Haven't ever seen a new copy though." Frank Mare V+ (Oriole 8080), Spottswood had it E (?). McKune had it E-(Perfect 181). Whelan had it N- (Perfect 181), formerly in the 1948-1955 Henry Renard collection.

**Joe Evans**—Mill Man Blues/(Arthur McClain—My Baby Got A Yo Yo)—Oriole 8082, Perfect 183, Romeo 5082. Estimated less than five of each label. Gayle Wardlow E+. No others reported. Joe Bussard(?).

**Sister Cally Fancy**—Hold To God's Unchanging Hand/I'm Gonna Tell My Jesus Howdy—Brunswick 7157. Bernard Klatzko: "My old copy (N) is in the Perls collection. McKune had one about V-."

**Blind Mamie Forehand**—Wouldn't Mind Dying If Dying Was All/Honey In The Rock—Victor 20574. Despite its appearance on the Victor 20,000 series, there may be less than five copies (?) of this eerie 1927 classic. Frank Mare, Gayle Wardlow and Pete Whelan all N-, Dick Raichelson and Bill Thompson E, Sherman Tolen E, and Robert Crumb E- with crack. Don Kent: "Another scarce early number, but probably closer to 15 or more. I canvassed three copies in 20 years, all fucked, the best one VV+ with a 15-groove cigarette burn went to Frank Mare. He later sold it, so I assume he found a better one."

**Jim Foster** (Sam Collins)—Yellow Dog Blues/Riverside Blues—Champion 15301. The estimated 10 (give or take a few) Champions are usually canvassed and turn up in less than E condition. Francis Smith: "had E- copy, but traded it." Russ Shor V to V+.

**Jim Foster** (Sam Collins)—The Jail House Blues/Loving Lady Blues—Champion 15320. Pretty much the same for this coupling. Paul Garon V+, Kip Lornell V to V+, Frank Mare V-, and Helge Thygesen G.

**Jim Foster** (Sam Collins)—Pork Chop Blues/Devil In The Lions Den—Champion 15359. Estimated about five copies. Andy Hale E-.

**Jim Foster** (Sam Collins)—Dark Cloudy Blues/Midnight Special Blues—Champion 15397. Estimated about five copies. Unfortunately, on Collins' second session, Champions and Gennetts have the same "fryin' bacon" surfaces. Helge Thygesen E, Pete Whelan V+ (looks E), Kip Lornell V.

**Jim Foster** (Sam Collins)—It Won't Be Long/Do That Thing—Champion 15453. Also about five. Pete Whelan V- (looks V+).

**Jim Foster** (Sam Collins)—Hesitation Blues/(George Jefferson—When A Man Is Treated Like A Dog)—Champion 15472. Probably less than five. Pete Whelan V (looks E-).

**Jim Foster** (?) (Sam Collins)—The Jail House Blues/Riverside Blues—Herwin 92043. (A note of caution:

supposedly, different takes of both titles (12736- and 12740-A) exist on Herwin, but all of Collins' "different takes" on other Gennett-family labels sound identical.) Steve LaVere has the only known copy V- with a two-inch rim bite.

**Jim Foster** (Sam Collins)—The Jail House Blues/Yellow Dog Blues—Silver-tone 5127. Five or less. The copy in best condition (E) was canvassed by Russ Shor in North Philadelphia.

**Jim Foster** (Sam Collins)—Do That Thing/Hesitation Blues—Silver-tone 5131. Less than five. Peter Brown E- ("looks E+"), Bernard Klatzko E-, Gayle Wardlow E-, and Kip Lornell V- (rim bite—NAP).

**Jim Foster** (Sam Collins)—I Want To Be Like Jesus In My Heart/(Rabbits Foot Williams—I'm Gonna Cross The River Of Jordan—Some O' These Days)—Silver-tone 5172. Four reported copies (Don Kent, Gayle Wardlow, and Pete Whelan—all E). Don Kent: "Dave Freeman found a Silver-tone with a bite out of it in Arkansas in the mid-70s."

**Jim Foster** (Sam Collins)—Midnight Special Blues/Pork Chop Blues—Superior 330—No known copies on the early, mysterious, and



THE FIRST BLUES 78 TO SHOW UP ON THE SUPERIOR 300 SERIES. (Note address at bottom)



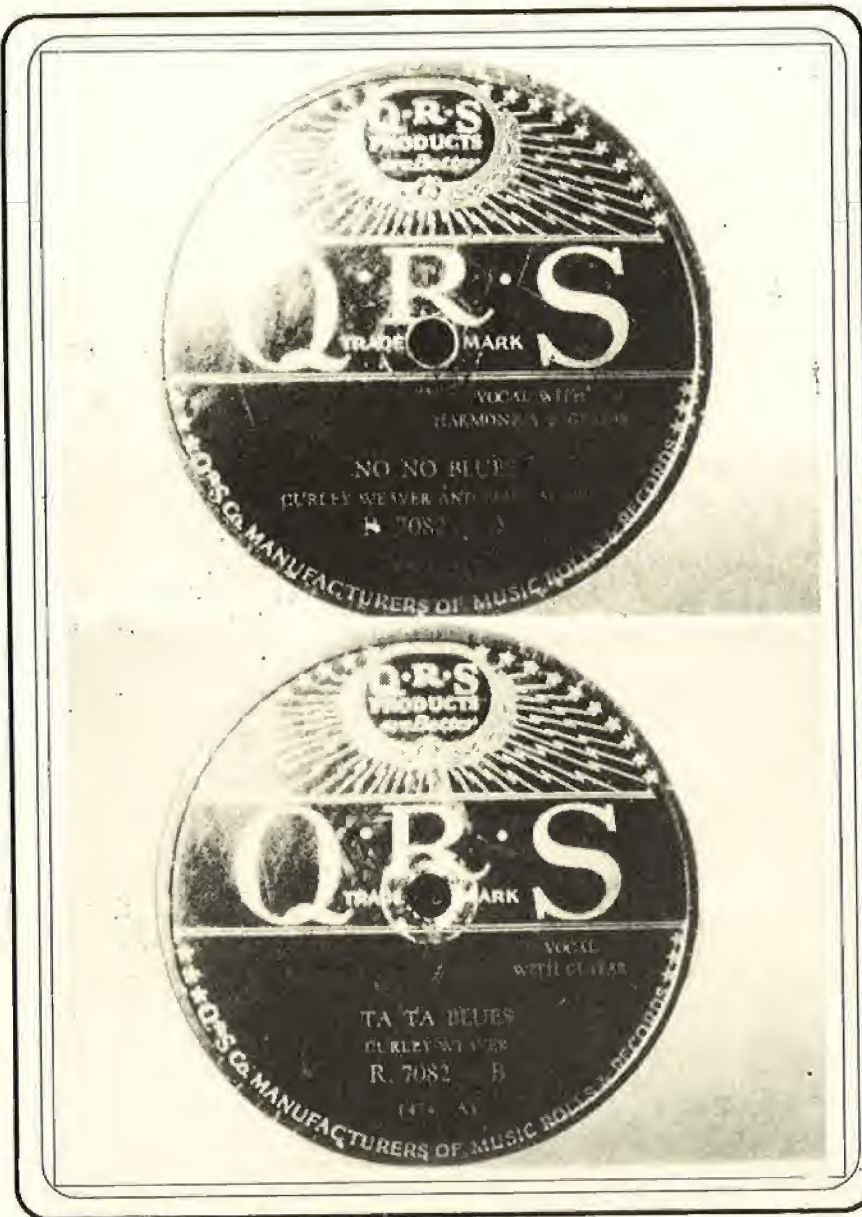


photo courtesy of KEN OILSHLAGER  
This "CLIFFORD GIBSON" QRS turned out to be CURLEY WEAVER

seemingly untraceable Superior 300 series.

**Jim Foster** (Sam Collins)—Devil In The Lion's Den (*sic*)/Hesitation Blues—Superior 350. One known copy E-. Found in Memphis by Dick Raichelson, this is only the second Superior 300 series ever to show up (it was apparently released in March 1928, almost three years before the initial release of Superior 2500 in December 31, 1930). Superior 350 reveals an apparent "typo" in the Gennett ledgers (?) (which list the A side as "The Jail House Blues"). Eugene Miller owns the only other Superior to actually turn up in this series: Superior 308—Rain/The Hours I Spent with You—Bob Kayser And His Orchestra (Walt Anderson)/Dick Burton And His Orchestra (Emil Seidel).

**Jim Foster** (Sam Collins)—Dark Cloudy Blues/Do That Thing—Superior 369. No known copies.

**John D. Fox**—The Worried Man Blues/The Moanin' Blues—Gennett 6352—Two known copies (?). Don Kent E+ and ? (Pseudonym unknown)—The Worried Man Blues/(Preston Lillard ?—Barrel House Blues)—Superior 389. No known copies, and it seems to be the highest number listed in this obscure series.

**Eli Framer**—Framer's Blues/God Didn't Make Me No Monkey Man—Victor 23409. The only known copy (E) of the poignant "Framer's Blues" is in The Perls Collection.

**Freezone**—Indian Squaw Blues/(Raymond Barrow—Walking Blues)—Paramount 12803. Estimated

between five and 10. Nick Perls Collection E+, Francis Smith E+, Larry Cohn E, Gayle Wardlow E ("I sold a N- copy to Max Vreede"), Dick Spottswood V, Robert Crumb V-, and Tom Tsotsi G.

**Georgia Bill** (Blind Willie McTell)—Law Rider's Blues/Georgia Rag—Okeh 8924. About two or three copies. None reported.

**Georgia Bill** (Blind Willie McTell)—Stomp Down Rider/Scarey Day Blues—Okeh 8936. Bill Thompson E+ and Francis Smith E- (Spottswood also reports having had a clean copy).

**Clifford Gibson**—Tired Of Being Mistreated-Part 1/Tired Of Being Mistreated-Part 2—QRS R7079 and Paramount 12866. Estimated 10 or more of the QRS and less than five of the Paramount (these and most of the succeeding Gibson titles are mild fare indeed, and we are dubious about including any of them). Frank Mare E+, Ron Brown, Robert Crumb, Sherman Tolen, and Pete Whelan all V+. No Paramounts reported. Spottswood: "You really wanna append aesthetic judgements?" Don Kent: "...your dubiousness is skewed."

**Clifford Gibson**—No No Blues/Ta Ta Blues—QRS R7082. This was mislabeled in QRS' 7000 series catalog (the discographical source). In February 1990, Ken Oilshlager found the only known copy of QRS 7082 (G+, hair crack and faint crescent crack) in North Carolina with the above titles. Ken supplies the following information: Curley Weaver And Eddie Mapp—No No Blues—QRS R7082-A (464-A) Vocal with Harmonica And Guitar/Curley Weaver—Ta Ta Blues—QRS R7082-B (474-A) Vocal With Guitar.

**Clifford Gibson**—Stop Your Rambling/Sunshine Moan—QRS R7083. Paramount 12923—Estimated less than three (none reported).

**Clifford Gibson**—Beat You Doing It/Whiskey Moan Blues—QRS R7087. Less than five. Both Spottswood and Whelan (V) had copies.

**Clifford Gibson**—Society Blues/Keep Your Windows Pinned—Victor 38612. Less than five. The Perls Collection E+.

**Clifford Gibson**—Old Time Rider/Brooklyn Blues—Victor 23255. Kip Lornell E+, and both Spottswood and Whelan had E+ copies.

**Gitfiddle Jim** (Kokomo Arnold)—Rainy Night Blues/Paddlin' Madeline Blues—Victor 23268. Kent: "The best copy (E) is in The Perls Collection with a half-inch chip; the only other copy (VV+) belongs to Paul Garon. If you listen to the reissue, you'll note a significant improvement in condition during the first verse."

**Mae Glover**—Pig Meat Mama/I

Ain't Givin' Nobody None—Gennett 6948. Estimated two or three on Gennett. Gayle Wardlow and Pete Whelan, both E-.

**Mae Glover**—Shake It Daddy/(Alura Mack—Long Lost Blues)—Gennett 6964. Estimated two or three. Pete Whelan N-.

**Byrd And Glover**—Gas Man Blues/(Iva Smith And Her Buddies (*sic*)—Doin' That Thing)—Gennett 7040. Pete Whelan V.

**Jack Gowdlock**—Poor Jane Blues/Rollin' Dough Blues—Victor 23419. Unheard. No known copies and none reported.

**Bobby Grant**—Nappy Head Blues/Lonesome Atlanta Blues—Paramount 12595. There was the N- copy offered by *The Record Changer* in the early '50s and it seems to have traveled from Pete Kaufman to Bernard Klatzko to The Perls Collection. Gayle Wardlow: "N-, one-inch hair crack—got it from Vreede in a trade. Kinney Rorrer has two copies in V- or less."

## PIANO

**Charlie Eaton** (Will Ezell)—Bucket Of Blood/Playing The Dozen—Herwin 93017. One or two copies. Gayle Wardlow: "I traded (John) Steiner a V- copy."

**Piano Kid Edwards** (piano solos)—Piano Kid Special/Give Us Another Jug—Paramount 13051. Two known copies Wardlow (E) and Whelan (V to V+).

**Man Kid Edwards**—Gamblin' Man's Prayer Blues/Hard Luck Gamblin' Man—Paramount 13086. One known copy (Whelan, E- with inaudible hair crack).

**Joe Evans**—Down In Black Bottom (10664-1)/Shook It This Morning Blues—Perfect 184 and Romeo 5083. Terry Zwigoff N-, Gayle Wardlow E (?), Francis Smith V+: "Werner Benecke also has a V+ copy," Dick Spottswood V, Robert Crumb V-, Pete Whelan V-.

**Joe Evans**—Down In Black Bottom (10664-2)/Shook It This Morning Blues—Oriole 8083. No copies of take 2 reported on Oriole.

**Joe Evans**—Early Some Morning Blues/(Arthur McClain—Cream And Sugar Blues)—Oriole 8084, Perfect 185, Romeo 5084. One known copy: Gayle Wardlow's E- Oriole 8084.

**Extra Blue Piano**—Mandolin Attachment (*sic*) (piano solos)—Blue Melody No. 1 (Frankie & Johnnie, etc.) (*sic*)/Blue Melody No. 2 (Strutters Ball, etc.) (*sic*)—Gennett Elec-

trical Transcription 1091. Not listed in the ledgers, probably recorded in 1935. Despite the fact that these solos are annoyingly out-of-tune, most of side two features a rousing version of Maple Leaf Rag. Two known copies (one E, Pete Whelan).

**Will Ezell** (piano solos)—Mixed Up Rag/Old Mill Blues—Paramount 12688. Francis Smith N-, Randy Stehle N-, Terry Zwigoff N-, Charles Huber E, Sherwin Dunner, Bill Thompson, and Pete Whelan all V+, Dick Spottswood: "Mine was E or so." Gayle Wardlow: "I traded N-copies of 12688 and 12773 to Randy Stehle of Kalamazoo, MI. I got them from (Bill) Russell."

**Will Ezell** (piano solos)—Bucket Of Blood/Playing The Dozen—Paramount 12773. Francis Smith N-, Randy Stehle N-, Don Kent: ("I have an E+ copy from George of The Abbey Book Store"), Pete Whelan E+, Charles Huber E, and Russ Shor V.

**Rudy Foster**—Black Gal Makes Thunder/Corn Trimmer Blues—

Paramount 12981. One known copy V+. Max Vreede writes: "...I believe this is the only copy extant...I won this...years ago in a *Record Research* auction for the grand bid of \$18..."

**Blind Leroy Garnett** (piano solos)—Louisiana Glide/Chain 'Em Down—Paramount 12879. The first side may be a candidate for the greatest recorded ragtime solo, but not the rarest. *The Record Changer* once offered two new copies in the same auction, and Jake Schneider had four new copies in his backroom vault. Francis Smith N- ("bought from Schneider"), Ron Brown E+, Pete Whelan E+ (from *Record Changer*), (Spottswood had it E+), Sherwin Dunner E, Charles Huber E, Randy Stehle V+, John Nilby V-. Robert Crumb: "My copy has distortions ('Louisiana Glide'), but is E+ on 'Chain 'Em Down'—trade from Terry Zwigoff, who also owns a nice E+ copy."

**Clifford Gibson**—Morgan Street Blues/West Trade Street Blues—QRS R7090. Don Kent: "Don't know of any."



GRAFTON, WIS.,—December, 1930  
(one known copy)





# STRANGE RAGTIME PIANO SOLOS FROM GENNETT'S MID-30s SOUND EFFECTS ERA

**Gilmore Sisters** (piano duets)—Some Of These Days/Rockin' Chair—Victor 23316. Three known copies. Pete Whelan E+ (Spottswood had it E+), and a N-copy in a recent (Mike Stewart?) auction.

**Mae Glover**—Two Timin' Woman/Good Hearted Woman—Champion 16244. None reported.

**Mae Glover**—Plantation Blues/North Wind Blues—Champion 16408. None reported.

**Leothus Green** (sic) (piano solos with talking)—Pork Chop Stomp/Washboard Rub—Gennett 6934. This St. Louis pioneer played both ragtime and blues-boogie, but these are his only recordings of fast rags. One reported copy on Gennett (we'll get to all those Supertones)—Pete Whelan V+.

**Pork Chop Green** (?)—She Walks

Like A Maltee Cat (sic.)/(Sam Townsend—Curbstone Blues)—Gennett 7116. No known or reported copies on Gennett.

**L. Green**—Down On Death Alley Blues/Five Minute Blues—Paramount 12865. Estimated less than five. Pete Whelan V to V+, Gayle Wardlow V-.

**Lee Green**—Dud-Low Joe (piano solo)/If I Get Drunk Who's Gonna Carry Me Home?—Vocalion 1467. His only solo on Vocalion (most Vocalions, spoiled by St. Louis-style, tone-deaf vocals, are little pursued). Spottswood: "My, my..." Sherwin Dunner E, Francis Smith E, The Perls Collection E (?), Pete Whelan E-. Francis Smith: "Rubbish—some very good! 'Dudlow Joe' a poor one. Try 1422 (N), 1501 (E+), 1566 (V+)." Russ Shor: "Most of his records are yawners, but 'Memphis Fives' is great."

**Marie Griffin**—What Do You Think This Is?/Blue And Disgusted—Paramount 13015. One reported copy Pete Whelan (G+, enlarged center hole). Spottswood: "my (former) copy, I think."

# STRING/ JUG SKIFFLE

**Eddie And Oscar** (Shreveport Home Wreckers)—Nok-Em-All/Flying Crow Blues—Victor 23324. Don Kent: "One known copy on Victor E." There are two reported copies of "Flying Crow Blues" ("Flying Crow" only, other side unknown) on Montgomery Ward. (Label number unknown and unlisted).

**Famous Hokum Boys**—Pig Meat Strut/Guitar Rag—Oriole 8007, Perfect 156, Romeo 5007, Jewel 20007. (Inadvertently omitted from the initial E-F-H listing.) Estimated less than five on any one label. The Perls Collection E- with crack. Others?

**Famous Hokum Boys**—Black Cat Rag/Saturday Night Rub—Oriole 8012, Perfect 147, Romeo 5012, and Jewel 20012. One of the great skiffle records. Estimated less than five on any one label. No known copies on Jewel. The Perls Collection E+, Paul Riseman (Romeo 5012) E, Dick Spottswood V, Robert Crumb V-. Howard Berg: "I've been trying to get this E copy on Oriole."

**Famous Hokum Boys**—Papa's Getting Hot/(That's The Way She Likes It)—Banner 0711, Oriole 8008, Perfect 148, Romeo 5010, Jewel 20010, and Homestead 23009. In judging performance, this is a one-sided record. Probably less than five of each label. Howard Berg E- (Perfect 148), Francis Smith: "Had one, but traded." No known copies on the intriguing Homestead label.

**Famous Hokum Boys**—Barrel House Rag/Come On In—Oriole 8042, Perfect 172, Romeo 5042, Jewel 20042. Don Kent: "Great and probably less than five." The Perls Collection (condition ?), Don Kent (?).

**Famous Hokum Boys**—Eagle Riding Papa/Somebody's Been Using That Thing—Homestead 16099. Pete Whelan V.

**Famous Hokum Boys**—Do That Thing/(Nancy Jane)—Perfect 155. The first title appears only on Perfect. Estimated less than five. Francis Smith V+ (plays E-).



from the collection of PAUL RISEMAN

NEW YORK CITY—April 9, 1930

**Famous Hokum Boys**—Rollin' Mill/(You Can't Get Enough Of That Stuff)—Perfect 161. Again, the first title appears only on Perfect. Less than five. Sherman Tolen E-. No others reported.

**Famous Hokum Boys**—Pie-Eating Strut/(Ain't Going There No More)—Banner 32310, Oriole 8105, Perfect 192, and Romeo 5105. Another "one-sided" record. Certainly less than five on any one label. Frank Marc E, Ben Kaplan V+, Robert Crumb V.

**Feathers And Frogs**—How You Get That Way/Sweet Black Dog—Paramount 12812. One of the "quieter" jugs on record. Russ Shor E+ and Frank Mare E-.

**Ben Ferguson**—Please Don't Holler Mama/Try And Treat Her Right—Victor 23297. The Perls Collection E+, Dick Raichelson E+, Joe Bussard E, Howard Berg E-, who writes: "One more, E internal hair crack in New York state."

**Georgia Jumpers** (sic)—California Blues/Guitar Rhythm—Columbia 14603. Estimated less than five of this Benny Nawahi item. Howard Berg E+ ("had V"), Terry Zwigoff E+(?), The Perls Collection ? Dick Raichelson: "A friend of mine in upstate New York just auctioned his copy."

**Georgia Jumpers** (sic)—Ukulele Benny/The Big Feet Rag—Columbia 14620. Same for this one. Sherwin Dunner E+ (copy reissued on Yazoo), Terry Zwigoff E+(?), Dick Raichelson E+/V+, Pete Whelan E/V+, The Perls Collection? Robert Crumb: "Zwigoff has clean copies of both of them."

**Blind Roosevelt Graves And Bro.** (sic)—Bustin' The Jug/Crazy About My Baby—Paramount 12859. Rarer than "Guitar Boogie" (Paramount 12820). Estimated more than 10. Francis Smith N, Robert Crumb E+ ("from Perls in trade for artwork"), Bob Fertig E+, Paul Garon V+ (and Spottswood had it E+). The Perls Collection?

**Blind Roosevelt Graves And Brother** (sic)—Staggering Blues (sic)/Low Down Woman—Paramount 12891. Much rarer than 12859. Probably less than 10. Paul Garon E-, Sherman Tolen V+, Pete Whelan G+.

**Blind Roosevelt Graves And Brother**—Happy Sunshine/I'm Pressing On—Paramount 12913—No known copies and none reported.

**Blind Roosevelt Graves And Brother**—St. Louis Rambler Blues/Sad Dreaming Blues—Paramount 12961. One known copy? Don Kent: "I found a copy of this in Wetumpka,



NYC—APRIL 9, 1930 (unlisted on Homestead)



Alabama, in 1966. It was about F+ and cracked. 'Sad Dreaming,' what I could hear, sounded great. But it was so depressing to own, I gave it to Mike Stewart, and he either gave it away or had it ripped off. Really, it was about the same shape as your 'Hard Luck Child.' Gayle Wardlow: "12961 was issued on Austrian Wolf label. It was 'Gish' shape—so at least one copy exists."

**Blind Roosevelt Graves And Brother—I Shall Not Be Moved/When I Lay My Burden Down—Paramount 12974.** The only known copy (E) went from Dick Spottswood to Pete Whelan to Bernard Klatzko to The Perls Collection. Bernard Klatzko: "There is another copy. Years ago, a collector (forget name) sent me a photo of this record to tempt a blues trade..."

**Roosevelt Graves And Brother—Woke Up This Morning/I'll Be Rested—ARC 6-11-74.** Estimated 10 or less of this fine borderline religious/skiffle 78. Francis Smith E+, The Perls Collection E+ (?), John Stephan E (auctioned in VJM), Ben Kaplan V+, and there are others.

#### FEATURES:

**MODE CONTROL:** L (left) & R (right): Many 78s and mono LPs have far more extensive damage to one side of the groove wall than to the other. These settings allow you to monitor each groove wall independently. **MONO** (both channels): For 78s and LPs. Properly balances rechanneled "phony" stereo LPs. **VERTICAL:** For "hill & dale" 78s (Edison Diamond Discs, Pathés etc.). This setting also allows you to quickly eliminate the rumble and/or hum contained in most 78s by use of the Owl's Rumble Filter. One can also monitor groove damage for quick filter settings and accurate grading. **INPUT:** The Phono setting is for magnetic cartridges. Aux for tape sources and Bypass for the playback of stereo LPs in conjunction with your current equipment. **TURNOVER & ROLLOFF:** These controls are the heart of the Owl system. They allow you to easily recreate the original recording curves, or the most revealing settings for high and low frequency response without the degradation of the RIAA curves used on all "hi fi" equipment. **RUMBLE FILTER:** Many 78s and mono LPs contain rumble and/or hum. This filter allows an extremely sharp cutoff of such extraneous noises without affecting the musical content of the recording. If in doubt, use the "Vert" position on the mode switch, which will quickly and accurately indicate the correct setting. **HIGH FREQUENCY FILTER:** This filter is used to limit the effect of surface noise. The filter is a "notch" or narrow band filter, which enables you to tune out a spe-

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from the collection of TERRY ZWIGOFF

HOWARD ARMSTRONG (fiddle, age 16), his brothers: Roland (bass, age 12), L.C. (guitar, age 8), and F.L. (mandolin, age 6), circa 1925.

# LOUIE BLUIE

## THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF

# WILLIAM HOWARD ARMSTRONG

as told to TERRY ZWIGOFF



The following article was culled from some 30 hours of material recorded during the production of "LOUIE BLUIE," a one-hour film portrait of Howard Armstrong that I produced and directed back in 1985.

The impetus to write this article grew from my frustration in not being able to include many of these stories in the finished film (I now regret not making a 90-minute movie as I originally intended!)

In writing this I sometimes pieced together several different versions of the same incident, yet tried to preserve the flavor of Mr. Armstrong's own words throughout..

Drawings by  
WILLIAM  
HOWARD  
ARMSTRONG

ONE

I was born in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1909, but we moved to LaFollette when I was three. LaFollette was a little town that kind of nestled in the middle of the Smoky Mountains, more or less at the base. They had a lot of industry there—coal mines, coke ovens, and a big blast furnace where they made pig iron.

My dad was a laborer at the blast furnace and a part-time preacher. We had a big family—there were 11 of us and everyone could play some musical instrument. I was exposed to music all my life. My dad played an old striped "potato-bug" Italian-style mandolin. My older sister Ella, she played the guitar, and my mother Daisy had a very

beautiful high soprano voice. They used to go out and serenade these white foremen and superintendents of the blast furnace while we younger kids (I was only four or five at the time) would wait, stay up late at night trying to stay awake to get some of those goodies that they'd bring home. They'd bring chocolate cake and things that we didn't get as kids, you know, being poor.

Anyway, my daddy had a lot of hungry mouths to feed, and so he was working odd jobs too. One time my dad went to help this white man kill hogs, Bob MacHenry. He said, "Tom, come on over and I'll give you the plucks and the guts." Of course, in those days, white people didn't even know what animal chitlins came from, that the chitlins are the guts, the big white guts. And the plucks are the part the white people used to throw away back then, and the lights are lungs, real squishy and squeezy, and the liver and maybe the kidneys or something like that.

So my dad went over there and helped him kill two or three hogs, great big hogs, and we got the guts and the liver and the whatever and brought them home. We took them down to the creek and washed 'em out and had them real clean. My mother was a real good cook, so she cooked those chitlins, she boiled them that night, then battered them that evening when my dad came home from working at the blast furnace. And it was just like you would batter oysters, golden brown they were cooked, and she had some cornpone all cooked up, and this white man just happened to come by. He smelled them and said, "Hey, what is that smelling so damn good?"

"Pork."

"Pork? I never seen nothin' looking like that by the hog!" Daddy said, "Fix him a plate, Daisy." And she gave him a plate of those good brown chitlins and I think they had some chopped up slaw on the side, and a piece of cornpone. That man almost drink those guts he did away with them so fast! He said, "Tom, can that woman of yours let me have another plate of that—what you call that? I'll give you a quarter for that."

"No, you don't have to pay for them because they come outta your hogs."

"Out of my hogs?!"

"Why sure."

"What is that?!"

"They're chitlins."

"You mean Hog Guts?"

"Why sure."

And that man screamed like a pig caught under a fence.

"Why you'll never get another gut out of my hogs as long as I live!" But he got some, because his wife wouldn't even try to learn to clean them, let alone cook them. And they weren't no good if you didn't clean them.

My mother was a very religious person. She fed me religion with breast milk almost. She always said that if you were ashamed to let your religion show, God would be ashamed to own you. Course, I didn't take much stock in that, you know, 'cause I was always a rebel.

Anyway, we were living in this little old company house. Shaped like an "L" shotgun house, you know, up on "Furnace Hill," which was the black community nearby the blast furnace. And one thing I remember about those days was the flies. The first screen doors ever I saw, I thought that they'd put 'em up there to keep the flies in the house, not out of the house! I didn't know. They had flies everywhere! You could just reach out your hand and grab two or three!

Every time you sat down to eat usually someone would have to stand over the table with a piece of paper and fan the flies away so you could eat your dinner—keep 'em knocked away so you could eat!

And mama used to make me wash dishes. I hated to wash dishes, but I had a secret system, 'till one day mama caught up with what I was doin' to get those dishes clean. We had an old hound dog, some neighbor did, it hung around the back door, and that hound licked those plates 'till they shined better than I could get 'em. I got a good beating for that!



A couple of hound dogs was better than a maid. You know, we had an outhouse then, and the kids usually got no further than the front yard. But those dogs just kept everything cleaned up! And the house was clean, but there were cobwebs all up in the ceiling, soot from the fireplace and the grate. You couldn't keep the ceiling clean, you know. So my brothers and sisters were playing some of what my mother called the good old hymns of Zion: *Come And Go With Me To My Father's House*, *I Want Jesus To Walk With Me*, and all that sort of thing. And they were just wailing away while my mother was making up biscuit dough for my dad who was due home soon from the blast furnace. He had biscuits for breakfast, cornbread for dinner, and then biscuits for supper. But that was the last flour in the barrel. And she had like a big pizza dough, whirling it around, rolling it out, and she forgot what she was doing 'cause all at once the spirit hit her, and she started shouting and flung the doggone dough up into the ceiling, and it got full of soot, cobwebs, and what not, and when the old man got

home, that's one time he lost what little religion he had. She had to make cornbread for him. She was too proud to go to the neighbors and borrow some flour.

I remember one time there was this preacher, I think his name was Jim Larch. He was preaching this *trial* sermon. When you say you want to go into the ministry, the bishop has to test your ability, so he give you this chance to deliver a sermon. So, he was preaching about "dry bones in the valley," and he did all right when he dispersed the bones, but where he really boo-booed was when he started assembling the bones. You know, he said "the toe bone jumped onto the foot bone, and the foot bone jumped onto the ankle bone," and he started just wiping his brow, you know. "And the ankle bone jumped onto the leg bone, and that jumped onto the hock bone." In other words, when he got through preaching, his anatomy was so poor, until he had the man's foot on top of his head! And my brother, he'd giggle at anything, so he just got caught in between the middle of the

seats—he almost went into a coma, he laughed so hard! So my mama dragged him outside, and they didn't know whether they were having a prayer meeting on the outside, or the inside, once she got through lambasting him!

There was another old black preacher on Furnace Hill named John Moore. He had a whole lotta sons...one named Goodies, one named Jaybird...and one Christmas they were giving a Christmas program. And they called on several of the younger kids to say a recitation. And they called on this one fella, Ollie Moore. He was the preacher's son, and I think he stayed in the first grade 'till he was about 18 years old—he just naturally wasn't learning. Booklearnin' wasn't for him, it was out of his range. So he got up there. "And now, we'll have a recitation by Ollie Moore." Ollie had a long-bibbed cap with the brim all flopped to one side that looked like Winnie Winkle. And some Brogan shoes...and knee pants. He wore about a number 12 shoe! And his Daddy said, "Boy, take your cap off!"



"Yowsah!"

"Put your hands down by your side!"

"Yowsah!"

"Now stick your chest out and 'cite your recitation!"

"Yowsah! A Christmas recitation. Went up on the mountain..." And at this point he started singing, you know.

"...and I seen the devil comin', pulled on my overcoat, beat the devil runnin'. Old folks, old folks, you'd better got to bed, before you get the devil in the your folks' head. Devil stole a pumpkin, and he run off to town, when he see the good Lord, throw the pumpkin down!"

And out the door he ran and kept on goin'! And everybody...my little brother, they had to pour cold water on him because I think he went into hysterics!

Once they had a protracted meeting—we call 'em revivals now—and they would have you come up to the mourner's berth, and tarry for religion. They had made a brush arbor—was just made out of brush—they'd put poles down the side and lay them across the top and whatnot. And so, they were just turnin' in left and right, and so this old preacher man, he was one of those kind who dressed up for the part. He wore a hambeater coat, looked like a junebug, you know, the coat cut away like that...and it had two tails back behind with big buttons on it. And he'd truck on down...he'd be a truckin' and a truckin', and that coattail would whip around and be hollerin', "Beat the Devil! Beat the Devil!" Then, he'd WHIP! right quick, and it would POP like a pistol, "Damn it to Hell!" That's almost what the coattail would say, you know. And he had the sisters just shoutin' and singin'...and the white people came in their buggies and their surries and old Chevys, and whatever, to see the show. Not to get religion so much.

"I'm so God-damned happy, gonna kill everybody!"



from the collection of TERRY ZWIGOFF

## A MUSICAL FAMILY—turn of the century

Anyway, one fella came, he'd been comin' there several nights—nobody noticed him much, but he had a pistol strapped around him and a shotgun. And he just was always reelin' and rockin'. I don't know, he coulda been about half-drunk... or whole-drunk. I don't know. But the spirit hit him! And the tears just squirted out the man's eyes!

He says, "Oh God, I'm so God-damned happy, gonna kill everybody!"

And he started shooting. First shot, bullet went over the preacher's head, and the preacher ducked down, low enough to dig a coal mine, nearly! And everyone took off—ran about a mile and a half down the road before I stopped. One of the deacons, I think, jumped through the roof of that brush arbor. Looked like an ox yoke with part of that arbor 'round his neck!

My mother was a very religious woman, and she doted on me...I don't know why. I think she kind of thought I was a little shining star. But one time, even years later, after my mother went to her just

rewards...or to wherever she went, I feel a little bit let down sometimes, when I think about how I must have hurt that poor woman, that day, that Friday afternoon, back in LaFollette, Tennessee. I'll tell you what I did.

After school on a Friday, in the afternoon, they would bring all the classes into the...we didn't...Black school didn't have any real auditorium. So, we'd bring 'em into the principal's room and have a program. And so, this was no exception. And many of the parents would come there visiting, and listen to their children recite. But this happened to be a very, seemingly, special occasion when we had, not only were we honored with more of the parents than usual, but we had old Reverend Parks. He was the head preacher there among the black people. They were all sitting there and enjoying the program. So, they would call on us.

"We'll have a recitation by Mable Page." She got up there, and she had about one verse of a very, very old poem...of a very great poet. It was called—I think Longfellow wrote it—it was called "The Sandpiper."

"Cross the narrow beach we flit, one little sandpiper...gathering bit by bit, the scattered driftwood bleached and briar..." BLAM! She sat down.

Old professor Upton, he grunted, he didn't say much, you known. And then, they called on somebody else. And then, they said, we will now have a recitation by Marvin McDowell. He was a great big, clumsy oaf, really. He got out there, roared back with his *basso profundo*, the big bass voice, you know. And he said,

"Cross the narrow beach we flit, one little sandpiper..." and the professor started clearing his throat, you know, and gave him some baleful looks, and he plunked down. And then, the professor says, "Excuse me at this juncture. I don't want to hear any more of that Sandpiper. The next one that gets up here and recites any portions of it, I'm taking 'em to the cloakroom. And I'm going to beat that Sandpiper out of them." And so that was that about that Sandpiper. But now, it finally got around to me. They say, "We will now have a recitation by Master William Howard Armstrong." My mother just beamed with joy. You could just see

the joy emanating from that poor soul's skin...you know. Even old Reverend Parks smiled, and I didn't like him at all, you know. And they would just nod. And she whispered, "Now, you show 'em Tiger...you tell 'em. Let 'em know that you a Armstrong."

Well, most of the kids knew they were going to get something unusual from me. It was going to be entertaining anyway...but no one had any idea what I was going to come up with. So, I walked out there, and I'd seen the statue of Lincoln and how he put one foot before the other one, out there, you know, that sort of special stance. And this one hand behind his back, I put on a little more of the dog than I should have put on. I says, "Professor Upton, members of the faculty, Reverend Parks, student body, and friends...I says, now you have been entertained, or should I say bored or amused by this little sandpiper. Most of you, and even those who are reciting the recitation don't know what a sandpiper is. A sandpiper is a little bird, kind of like a snipe, or a crane, or something that runs up and down, picking up shellfish, or whatever he can, by the ocean. He's found near the light-

houses and things." And they nodded, you know...(You tell 'em son. You know what you're talking about.) "But I want to tell you, I declare unto you, I am not going to say a thing about any sandpiper. But I am going to talk about a bird which we are all familiar with. It's a local bird. But I promise you that I won't bore you when I speak about this bird. He's known as the woodpecker. There are many of species of woodpecker...but to make a long story short, we'll get into the recitation."

I was sure that you could hear a pin drop. And it was real silent. Everybody was...the air was just charged with expectation. I said:

"The woodpecker flew to the schoolhouse yard, and he wanted to peck, because his pecker was hard. The woodpecker flew to the schoolhouse door, and he pecked so long that his pecker got sore."

And by that time before I could say another word, here come old Rev. Parks, Mama, and old Professor Upton. They were coming all three different directions, getting me off the stage. But the last verse was a halfway decent...

"He pecked all night 'till the break of day, and...when the sun rose up, he flew away."

And that's when you could hear WHOPS, BOPS, BIFFS, and everything else landing on poor me!

After my dad got religious and got into the preaching business, well, his church members decided that the mandolin was the devil's instrument, and it wasn't becoming for a minister to play string music, so he threw his old mandolin in my lap. So, that's how I started off playing music with that old mandolin. My dad gave me some instructions, and I learned chords, harmony, and how to play double stops, two strings at once.

And now, I was happy for a while, playing my old daddy's potato-bug mandolin. But one day there was a blind man who came to town from Knoxville playing the fiddle, named Roland Martin. He'd show up at the coal mines on payday and play for the workers and pass the hat



LOUIE BLUE ARMSTRONG PLAYING MUSIC WITH HIS BROTHERS, CIRCA 1925  
HOWARD ARMSTRONG (FIDDLE, AGE 10) ROLAND ARMSTRONG (BASS, AGE 12)  
L.C. ARMSTRONG (GUITAR, AGE 8) F.L. ARMSTRONG (MANDOLIN, AGE 6)





SHOOING FLIES



THE ARMSTRONG BAND

around. He could play those old country tunes like *Turkey In The Straw*, *Sour Wood Mountain*, and *Downfall Of Paris* and make a classic out of 'em! When I heard that, I didn't want too much more to do with the mandolin. The fiddle, that was my instrument, I wanted to learn to play! And so, my dad didn't have money to buy me a violin. So, he took a goods box and a pocket knife and carved me one. Cut me out a little fiddle. I wish I had it today. It was a very neat instrument and it had a nice tone. And I ran a nag a half a day to get the hair off the tail to make the bow. He made me the bow with one of my mother's curtain sticks, you know. And so, I started whittlin' away on the fiddle.

And about the same time I took up the fiddle, I started out learn-

ing to draw pictures. My dad could paint or draw anything and I always wanted to imitate him, but when I was a kid I didn't have any real artist material. So, I'd swipe my mama's bluing that she used to put in to bleach the clothes, that was my blue. And I'd get walnut stain for yellow and I'd get pokeberry to make red. Mixed 'em up and had pretty nice colors, you know. And there wasn't a cat in the neighborhood that thought very much of me 'cause that's where my paint brushes came from. I'd catch an old cat, pull the hair out of the tip of his tail and jam it in a goose quill. But then I found a better way to get my paint. One day I was walking in the rain, and the people that lived in this black community ("Furnace Hill" we called it), well, they used to use crepe paper—the

women did, for decorating their shelves and whatever. And it had all various colors and so I was walking in the rain by a trash can where someone had thrown out some of this crepe paper. And I saw these beautiful colors running down that had been dissolved by the rain water. And so I got me some of this crepe paper and soaked it in water and squeezed the dye out of it in little bottles. That's how I got started in the drawing business. Most of the black people on Furnace Hill figured that drawing and those things were just a waste of time. Some of the old folks would say, "Looky that boy markin'." I'd be outside the house scribblin' and they called that "marking." They thought that was a real waste of time and money, see. And we didn't have a basement in our



"You couldn't play blues for whites then."

from the collection of TERRY ZWIGOFF



house. We just had an underpinning and in the summer times I would get an old rug and throw it down and lie down on my chest and start painting and sketching for hours.

Now, they had a restrictive covenant, racial covenant, that we blacks weren't supposed to mingle with whites. Especially when you got a little older and started reaching the age of puberty. Then, I don't know, somebody start teaching them this hate. But even so, in all fairness, I can say that in my home town we never did hear of lynchings or any of those things.

But I learned at an early age that poverty knows no color lines. So we little black kids, little white kids, all got together and mingled and played and scrapped and did whatever. There were Italians and Hungarians and whatever people from southern parts of Europe, and we kids would play and play together, and I learned how to start speaking foreign languages. A lot of the white kids would invite me over to their houses. They were interested in music—for me to play my mandolin and fiddle. And their mother, when she fixed the table, she'd say, "Come on all you youngins. Sit down here and eat." Nobody ever said anything, and I ate all I could hold and go back to fiddling some more. And I taught them things about what I knew and then I picked up things from them. That's the way it was. An exchange. I used to go to this one Italian boy's house—Giuseppi Lobertini. He would take me to his house, and his uncle liked me. He would say, "You smarta boy. I teacha you my language." And he started me to reading the Italian newspapers. He had the *Bullettina De La Cera* and *A Progresse De Americana* and *La Tribona*, and it just titillated him to see me with my little black self speaking this language. And I learned 'round nine years old that I was speaking better Italian, grammatically, than I was English.

After I learned how to play fiddle pretty good, I organized a string band of my brothers. I played the fiddle, my brother Roland played the bass—homemade bass my dad made out of a goods box. My brother

L.C. played the guitar, and F.L., the baby boy six years old, played the banjo-lalley, or the ukelele, and he could play it and everything jelled pretty nice, him being so little and kind of on the cute side. We'd get pretty good tips too.

"We played mostly for white people, because they had the money."

We'd play for outings, picnics, fish fries. We never heard of a "chitlin strut" back then because most of the blacks that ate chitlins, they didn't want you to know they ate 'em anyhow! They'd slip and eat 'em! We played mostly for the white people, because they had the money. We would play for their proms and parties and church picnics. Or maybe they'd have a political campaign and they would hire us—it's like when we went to Johnson City. It was a slum, more or less. And they come out and give all the voters a pint of liquor and buy their vote and have us to play. We had to learn to play the pop songs like *I'm Looking Over A Four-Leaf Clover* and *Brown Eyes, Why You Blue*. You couldn't play blues for whites then. If you came out there playing some low-down blues, either they'd pack up and leave, or you'd better pack up and run! They'd put some heat on you that you couldn't stand. If we played for the country white people, the common class, well we'd play square dance music like *Comin' Round The Mountain*, *Old Joe Clark*, and *Ida Red*. And when we played for the black people it would all depend on what element we played for—because there were the upper class or elite black people. We would call them "Ciditty," which is black chat for high falootin', high strung, or elite. Black people say: "She's done got ditty, or ciditty." That means high-brow. And you couldn't play no low-down funky blues for them neither. We'd have to play basically just what we had to play for the high-brow white people. Now, the regular black people you could play blues for. That's what they'd want to hear.

They'd also have square dances, and you'd be surprised to know how close they were to the white square dances.

After they tore down the blast furnace there in LaFollette, my Dad became a waiter at the Grand Morgan Hotel in Jellico, Tennessee, which is on the Kentucky state line. It was the home of the great opera star Grace Moore. And she was just reaching the pinnacle of fame, when she came back to visit her home town, Jellico. And my Dad was waiting tables at the hotel and got them to let us boys entertain with our string band this great star. And she was very much impressed. She says: (it wasn't the right thing to do then, for white people to call black people "Mister") "Uncle Tom (his name was Thomas), why don't you take these boys away from here? Take 'em up North somewhere and give them a break?"

"Well, I don't know. There's so many of them and I don't have time. Trying to feed 'em keeps me so busy. They'd starve to death before they got to the train station!"

But anyway, we played for her and it jelled pretty nice. My baby brother, F.L. was playing uke, and he was six years old, and by him being so little, and on the cute side, well, they'd give us good tips. They were paying us to play, but they'd give him the tips. Now, our Dad didn't allow us to wear belts then. He was a little bit on the puritanical side I guess, and we had to wear suspenders. And in those days, the pants didn't fit real snug like they do today. You had to wear a belt or suspenders to hold 'em up! But anyway, F.L. was getting so many coins in the way of tips, he couldn't hold 'em all. And I says, "I know what we'll do. We'll just let him be the kitty."

So, we tied the bottom of his pants at the cuffs, and they dumped dollars, quarters, half-dollars. He got five times more money in tips then as what they were paying us! I think they paid the whole band six dollars, which was a dollar more than my Daddy was making a week there waiting tables! But anyway, after everything was over, I tried to act dignified.. till we got him back to

the place where we were staying, and we turned him upside down, and money ran everywhere. We fought like cats and dogs over that money. He screamed "They given me this here money!"

I said, "Give you nothin'. This here got to be divided four ways. And on top of that, the biggest part goes to the household!" And boy, we fought like snakes over that!

One time I was asked to join a couple other black, older musicians in LaFollette who had got a job playing in the Italian section of town for a wedding. We called it "Talley-Town." I was the only young boy in the band. There was Clarence Venable, Andy Cline, and a friend of theirs, Otha Blue. Only problem with Otha was, he couldn't play any music. They just told him he could come along to the wedding and pretend to play, and then, he could get in on some of that good eatin'. Lots of good food at these weddings, you know.

So, old Otha, he couldn't play a lick, but he had to have an instrument, so they gave him a fiddle to hold, and they greased his bow with lard, so he could slide it up and back and not make a sound. Just do what we do. Go through the motions they told him. The Italians won't know the difference. Well, for awhile we got by, but then Otha started having some of that good old Dago Red, and he believed he really was playing! He got out of line, out of step, and everything else! We'd finish a tune, and he'd still be sawing, rolling his eyes and gritting his teeth and not making a sound! So, they eventually caught him, but they didn't care so much. In fact, they just put him on the bed and let him sleep it off.

Back then, I knew of several white musicians who played blues, because they were like I was in a way. They lived practically in the black neighborhood and worked in the fields or the mines. But very few white musicians really could play blues, because I heard a lot of them try. Blues is a sad lament—a way of life. You had to dress and live like what you sang about—that's what real blues is about.

The first string bands that I came in contact with were just local bands in the hills around LaFollette. Most of 'em were composed of just whatever came into hand. Mostly, they had mandolins and fiddles and guitars and banjos. And once in a while they would ease a little ukelele in there and a bass fiddle. The bass fiddles were bowed not plucked like we do now. There were about as many black bands as white, the whites mostly played traditional songs, tunes that were handed down from their ancestors, you know, from Scotland, England. They played hoedowns and for square dancing mostly. And I remember the first interracial group I ever saw—they were called "The Blacks And The Whites"—two black guys and three white guys. And they played—nobody made any big deal that I saw—they played for weddings and picnics and everything.

Of course, we didn't have electric instruments or microphones when we'd be playing for these dances. Didn't have any kind of sound system except natural. But we'd be playing in one of these old ex-slavery time houses and they were well built and they'd had over a hundred years of seasoning out and they were regular sounding boards. And I don't care how many people were in the house, well, you could still hear us clearly. The acoustics were so good that you could hear a rat piss on cotton! It was just that kind of a thing.

And I ran into some very good musicians in those days. There was some weird characters. Guys named "Cocaine," "Good Bootie," "Salty," "I Will Kill Him," and all those names. Some of them played so many things: stove pipes, cue sticks, broom handles, jug—I mean, (they) could really blow a jug!

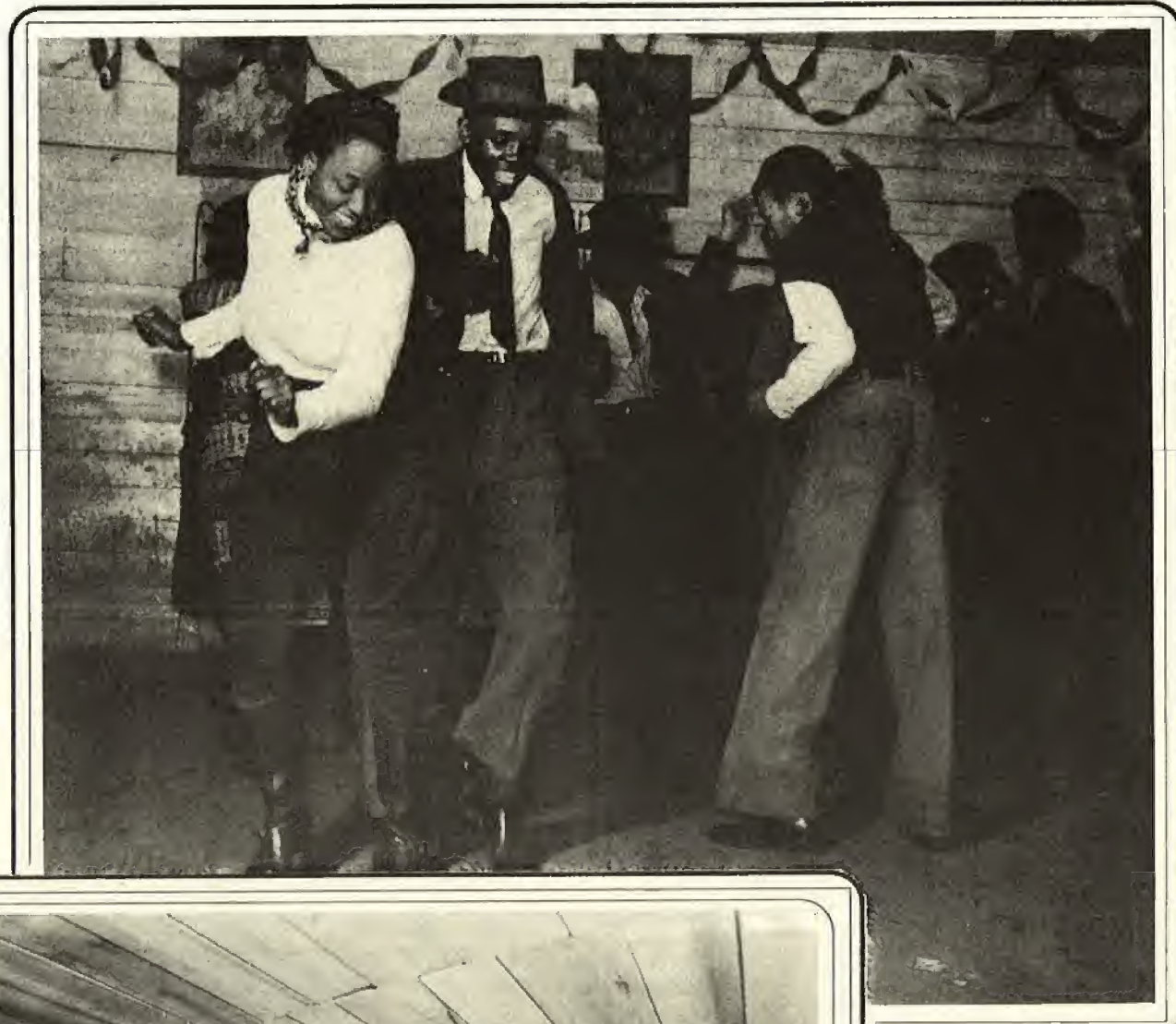
"Peg leg Sam' could play three harmonicas at once (one with his nose)."

There was this one guy named "Peg Leg Sam." And he looked like he was in bad shape. I don't

know whether he fell under a train or how the old boy lost his leg, but his looks didn't stop at cutting his leg off. It looked like somebody had thrown him through a giant meat chopper or somethin', 'cause he was really in bad shape. It almost hurt to look at him, honest to goodness. I'm not trying to make fun of the man, 'cause I loved him. He was a beautiful person. Anyway, he could play three harmonicas at once—two with his mouth and one with his nose. But it didn't turn me on too much to see the cat blowing it with his nose. So I said, it's a good thing you hadn't got a bad cold or something, 'cause I know just about what shape the harmonica would be in, you know. But, he'd have one in one corner of his mouth and one in the other corner and be holding one to his nose, and boy, he would just have him a whole band! And he could even sing right through the notes of that instrument! And that was quite an accomplishment, I thought, in itself.

And so my little string band of my brothers played quite a few jobs, and word got around, and they heard about us up at WROL, the local broadcasting station over in Knoxville, and invited us to play over the radio there. We put out the news that we were going to broadcast and everybody up and down the strip had their sets turned on because they knew we were going to come over big. All our fans were rooting for us, you know. We were going to play this tune, *I Miss A Little Miss Who Misses Me In Sunny Tennessee*. And I rehearsed it and I had it down pat and everybody was gonna hear us, you know. This was our big moment. So, I knew every line of the song, every note of the song until the man announced it. When the man says, "And now we have the 'Wandering Troubadours', a wonderful string group of youngsters headed by W.H. Armstrong." And that's when my mind went just as blank as a day at sea. I couldn't remember how to start it but I knew better than to just stand there and look like the fool I was. So, I started sawing at random on the fiddle all the way from C to E<sup>b</sup> and my brothers were looking at me like, what you trying to do? And my brother,





from the collection of TERRY ZWIGOFF

"We'd be playing in one of these old ex-slavery time houses and they were well built—  
The acoustics were so good that you could hear a cat piss on cotton!"

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Roland, the bass player, tried to lean over and whistle the tune to me but he chewed tobacco and when he started whistling he got strangled on the tobacco juice and I thought that was so funny that I forgot how nervous I was and it came to me. And we took it right on off from there and the program came out beautiful. And the next day, all the guys on the street and down at the pool room and the sweet shop said, "Man, you guys really tore it up last night, but that was the craziest intro I ever heard."

And I said, "You don't know how near you came to not getting a song!"

"You play just like the Injun fellows do back in Oklahoma."

One time, I was walking down Hickory Valley Road with a black fellow who played guitar by the name of Burl Hollins. He looked like an old silent Indian guy, like he came off the reservation. And these two guys drove by us, and stopped their car. They said, "You fellows play music, don't you?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "I bet you're good musicians. Would you like to play us a song?"

I said, "Yeah, we play." And we stood by the road and started playing:

He said, "You know, you play just like the Injun fellows do back in Oklahoma."

I said, "Wonderful."

He said, "Now, I don't know. If you're not full-blooded, you got a whole heap of Injun blood in you."

Well, wasn't any point in me saying no. And so...

He said, "What about you?"

Burl was lots older than I was, at the time.

He says, "What's your strain?"

And he says, "Choctaw. I'm about half Choctaw."



JOE EVANS: A LOCAL BOOT-BLACK, BUT A VERY GIFTED MUSICIAN, GOING DOWN VINE STREET, (KNOXVILLE - TENN.) PLAYING HIS TWELVE STRINGED GUITAR BEHIND HIS BACK.

"You know," he said. "...My daddy, he's crazy about Indian musicians. How would you like to go down to Lost Creek?"

Well, that didn't sound too cool, you know. He says, "Be ready tonight, and we'll take you down there."

And sure enough, they picked us up, and we went down to Lost Creek. And that old man, I forget what his name is now, he had a great big farm and everything. And it was right in the heart, where there was a whole lot of Indian tradition and lore. Historical lore, you know what I mean? Because this tribe of Indians was...belonged to this chief...this river was named "Calf Killer." The Calf Killer River. And the man, I don't know. Burl was the guy that really got us into this, you know. He says, "I understand that you fellows are mostly Injun."

I said, "Well, we have Indian blood, you know."

He said, "Well, Chief, there's a rock house out there that's got some mighty queer Injun writing on it."

You know, they were hi-eroglyphics. Or something.

He says, "You expect you could read that?"

Well, I done got all caught in the web now, and so I says, "Well, yes, I believe I can. I might as well." And I says to myself, "Well, I better be reading."

So, sure enough, they made us stay all night, and they fixed a big spread and everything. And the next morning, said, "Well, you come on out here and read what's on this, and you never heard a guy read fake Indian writing as well...I mean, I amazed myself. Shakespeare, I made



a fool out of Shakespeare and those guys. And I mean, I told 'em about. I said, "Now, this writing here, it is spiritual writing. It is like an ode to the great spirit. And these are hieroglyphics because, you know, the Indians didn't have any written language, you know. And the only type of Indians that had any written language was the Cherokee, you know, which belonged to the seven nations and what not. Oh, he was very much impressed. And I began to show him what this symbol meant over here and this little wavy things...I said, that means about where the ancestors came from over the big sea. This ancient sea, you know, and the sun when it puts...might have been, I don't know. But anyway, I lied so glibly that I began to believe the thing myself. It might have been the spirit of one of those ancestors that told me what to say. But the man was so well pleased, he invited me, he said, "Chief, any time you come, stay a week...stay a month if you want to." And I got out of that trap.

"Joe Evans—a shoeshine guy—played a 12-string guitar and wore bedroom slippers all the time."

About this time, my brother Roland and I met a guy in Knoxville named Carl Martin. He was the younger brother of the blind fiddler Roland Martin, who I'd heard as a



from the collection of  
GAYLE DEAN WARDLOW

kid. Anyway, Carl played all the string instruments, and I especially admired his bass playing—very few guys could bow a bass like Martin. He had an act of spinning the bass around. And hit a stroke with the bow and spin the bass and never missed a stroke. And he'd bring the house down. And he could actually bow a fiddle tune on the bass. We used to call him "Old Folks". 'Cause they tell me from the day he was born, that he looked like he was a hundred years old. And so, we formed a band called "The Tennessee Chocolate Drops," me on fiddle, Carl on bass, and my brother Roland on guitar. And we used to play up and down Vine Street in Knoxville. There were a lot of good singers and musicians there then. There was Joe Evans, a fellow who was a shoeshine guy who used to play a 12-string guitar. He never would wear solid shoes except in the winter. Summer, he wore bedroom slippers all the time. And you'd see him tippin' down the stroll. The big stroll, Vine Street, with his guitar behind his back, playin' the heck out of it.

During those days, Knoxville was about the most liberal town in the South towards blacks. As a matter of fact, one black man ran...I think he ran for mayor. And it was common to see blacks on the city council, and they had black policemen in Knoxville before anywhere else in the South. I knew nearly every one of 'em when I was a young boy around there...John Moffet Scruggs and Tom Knoller...I remember 'em all.

Mama Callie Jet and Dace Haynes:  
"Boy, pick that piano!"

One day, the Brunswick Recording Company had put a notice up in Knoxville: "If you have any talent, such and such an agent is coming through," and I remembered this woman, Leola Mannings was there, and her husband told me that you better be down to Jean's Barber Shop. That's where most musicians managed to be 'cause we gathered and they made us welcome there. They were going to be there to pick

up some talent. And there was this other fellow that—aw, he was out of sight. "Blue Card" we called him. His name was Dace Haynes. He played the piano and I don't think even Fatha Hines had anything on Dace Haynes. And this woman, we called her "Mama Callie Jet," had a voice that would shake the windows. That woman could really sing the blues, had a wonderful voice. And I've never seen a woman, I don't care, that goes for Bessie Smith, Ida Cox, Ma Rainey, any of 'em—that could sing like that. And he played the piano for her and I think they recorded a little bit also. I don't know. I never heard the record. Mama Callie Jet and Dace Haynes. She used to tell him when he played the piano, she'd say, "Boy, pick that piano. Pick it." She didn't say beat it, she said pick it. And he picked it too!

And the talent scouts there heard about our group and had us record up on at Gay and Vine, I think it was. And the name of the recording company was the Brunswick, Balke, & Collender Co. This was in 1930. And a couple other local musicians recorded then too. One was this woman Leola Mannings and her husband Eugene Ballinger. But on this particular recording, you know, we didn't do an album. We did just two sides. We did *Knox Company Stomp* that we played in G, and that was a hot fiddling piece. Even so, I did quite a bit of *pizzicato* plucking, I plucked the strings on there. And we played, I think, a country song called *I'm Looking For The Bully Of The Town*. And it's like a rag, similar to what we used to call a rag. It's played in C, and you modulate down into A7, D7, G7 and back to C again. And we played that, and I played the fiddle on that, but I think the highlight on that record was Martin's bass playing. And I wish he were still here, so I could tell him that. He took a few solos on that record with the bow, you know, and I'd never seen anybody could bow a bass like him.

Most of us couldn't read music, you know, but it wasn't uncommon to find black (string) musicians who could read anything. You could put some ink on a chicken's foot and let it walk across some lines,



from the collection of TERRY ZWIGOFF

and they'd play that. At that time, I did more spelling than I did reading, and (Carl) Martin did no spelling whatsoever. But, when he found out that I could spell pretty good, he would go into the music stores and buy piano scores, and I would pick out the melody and everything. After I'd gone through it once or twice, we didn't need the music anymore.

Once, we went to Blue Field and ran into a black barber. Everyone in the shop was a musician. One guy, he said, he was from the old country, in the East somewhere. He was a black guy, George Esquitz, but he got his musical education in London, and like I said, he could read anything you'd stick up there. He was a way out violin player. And

"We'd play on the corner—anywhere we could pass the hat around."

he liked us because we were young boys on the road, and what not. And he began to, you know, show us points of music. He taught Carl how to run the chromatic scale in the key of B flat and in those days, most of the country musicians didn't know how to play in but one key. Some didn't know but one song, you know what I mean. And to tell most of us little string band players to play in B flat, you might as well go ask a bear to bring you the Statue Of Liberty. That's what a difficult task that was!

Anyways, we used to play in front of cafés and other places of business in Knoxville. We'd play on the corner...anywhere we could pass the hat around. Oftimes, we'd be playing in front of a business or

restaurant, and they'd invite us to come inside and play. We'd play, and people would come in, and (we'd) pass the hat around, and they'd drop some money in the kitty.

"This Morristown Tiger, he could blow that fox chase."

One day, we ran across this giant black dude playing harmonica. He was from Morristown, Tennessee, and we called him "Morristown Tiger," and that one man could do, I guess, anything that could be done on Harmonica. Most blacks in those days call it "French harp" or just plain "harp"—we didn't say



harmonica. Now, I'd heard several white musicians play harmonica around LaFollette and all around there, but to me, it was very thin. I'm not lying or anything, trying to brag on anyone else. But this Morristown Tiger, he could blow that fox chase, and he would call all the dogs together, and he would make a sound on his harmonica, and it would say, "What did you say? You want your meat?" And you could hear the dog answer, almost as plain as I'm talking here, "I want my meat." Well, if you want that meat, you better get out there and catch it. And then would start that fox chase—and he would rev the time up—you know, the tempo. And you could hear those dogs howling and hear the fox trotting and the dogs after him. And it was really a masterpiece.

Later on, this little hunchback fellow named DeFord Bailey performed at that Grand Old Opry. He could just blow...look like he would blow all the reeds out of that thing. And white ears listened to that. And from then on, a lot of white musicians began to imitate that black sound, you know, that blues sound. That old plaintive sound from doing that up-draft on it. Like, if you had a C harmonica, well, you could play the blues in G on it, because you would twist...bend the reeds with your breath. Could make all sorts of weird sounds.

So, Carl and me, we played all over Knoxville. We used to play in front of these cafés and places of business on the corner—anywhere we could pass the hat around. And we played whatever the people wanted and we were happy to play it, because when someone asked for a song, Martin would be around with his hat—that derby hat he wore and looking to hear something clink, which was money that was dropped in there. See? So we played whatever the people wanted. Some of the tunes, well, they came out of the gay 90s like *Waiting For The Robert E. Lee, Anybody Here Want Any Coffee Ground?* And I picked up on a lot of those songs because I didn't have any clear course which way my music should go. I got some from the country white players, and I picked up some from these rounding guys like "Salty." Plagiarism is a way of life



HENRY ALEXANDER TALKING TO CARL MARTIN AND ME AFTER ADMONISHING HIM FOR PLAYING HIS BANJO SO LOUD AND WRONG: "LISTEN YOU TWO PUNKS. I BEEN PLAYIN' MUSIC FOR SEVENTEEN YEARS... THEY AIN'T BUT SEVEN MAJORS, SEVEN MINORS, SEVEN SHARPS AND SEVEN FLATS AND BY GOD I MAKES 'EM ALL!" "YES, IN THE WRONG PLACE!" I TOLD HIM.

with a lot of musicians. They'll steal the other guy's riffs and things. So, Martin, he put Salty, as we say, "right on his shoulders." In one beautiful number that we played, and I stole a little taste of it too, called *I'll See You In My Dreams*.

But there was oftentimes musicians have a little chip on their shoulder, when one thinks that he's a little bit better than the next guy and especially if he's going to get closer to the women—to the girls. Well, he'll try to run him off, chase him off the scene. And that's what you call "cutting a guy." It's like Martin and my group would go down the street, and we saw one of those, what we called country jug bands playing, and they weren't too good, you know. We called the group the "Past Participles," the "Has-Beens." They would avoid us whenever they could. But sometimes, just by luck, we'd run down on 'em at the edge of town at some little swanky place, and they'd be getting some heavy tips dropped in the kitty. And so, we

would—old Martin would say—"Let's cut these dudes." And it was lucky that we had our instruments with us, because if we were to tip up on them playing and we didn't have our instruments, no way in the world they'd lend you theirs! And they couldn't stop us from playing. The crowd out on the street corner would say, "Let these other boys play." And so we'd out play them so far until they would pack up their little git-fiddles and things and take off like a bunch of chicken thieves. That got real sweet to Martin and me.

But my buddy Martin had a little habit. He had a little habit of pawning his instrument. And during the shuffle, he pawned mine! And many times we'd get a gig and have no instruments to play on. And so one time we got a real choice gig playing for some white socialites in Knoxville, but we didn't have any instruments. Uncle had got the instruments as per usual, and so Martin said, "Well, we'll just have to take Mr. Henry Alexander along, because he got some good instruments." 54

Carl Martin:  
"Alexander couldn't  
play enough music to  
keep the flies off  
him!"

Henry Alexander was older than me and Carl—about 45 or 50 years old. He wore one of those big derby hats, had a handlebar mustache, had a deep bass voice; he was a little bit on the short side, and he wore these policeman-type shoes and a coat down to his knees. And he called himself a "musicianer." He talked a good game, but his playing was very, very light. Martin used to say, "He couldn't play enough music to keep the flies off him!" But what me and Carl were interested in was the beautiful instruments he had. He had one of the best bass fiddles there was in Knox County. He had the best of instruments, good violin, banjo, good guitars and everything. We used to always see him coming down Vine Street with his fiddle, carrying it just like it was a little tender baby under his arm.

So anyway, me and Carl had got a real good play for these Ciditty white people, and there were going to be some nice funds coming. I think we were going to get about three dollars apiece for that gig, and that was real heavy money. So Carl said, "What are we going to use for instruments?" And I said, "Go get them out of the pawn shop." He said, "You know I ain't got no money to get them out the pawn shop." I said, "Well, go see Mr. Alexander. If we take him in on the gig, we can use his instruments." So he goes up to him and says:

"Mr. Henry?"

"Well, what is it, Carl?"

"How would you like to go and do a little gig with us?"

"Well, you know I sure would."

"Well, we'll have to use your instruments."

"That's what I figured. There was a catch in it somewhere."

And so, Carl talked him into it, and Henry brought a fiddle for me

and a guitar for Carl. When I saw he was going to play banjo himself, my feathers just fell. Not that I had anything against the banjo, but when he played it, it was something else. It was something else that you would rather do without and lots more that was left to be desired. So, that night we started playing. We did all right 'till they got to passing the spirits around. Of course, I never drank in my life. I never smoked. Martin took a little taste, and Alexander took a big taste. He took my part, I think. And he got to twisting his handlebar mustache and got louder and louder with that old banjo and started drowning everybody out. We were afraid to say anything, because he was likely to get angry and pack up and take his instruments with him. And I wanted those three dollars we was going to get for making this gig, you know. And so, finally Martin came out of his bag, and he said, "Look at here, Mr. Alexander. Man, with all that dog-gone cowhide you got flumping and plunkin' on, you drowning out the rest of the band. Why don't you play it softer?"

"Well, I'll tell you young whippersnappers," he says, "Now, I'm a musicianer. I don't take no guff from no little shaved tails like you two boys. I've been playing music for over 17 years, and there ain't but seven majors, seven minors, seven sharps, seven flats and by God, I makes all of them!"

And then, I couldn't stand it any longer. I said, "I know you make 'em all, but the trouble is—you make 'em all at the same time!" And so that was the end of him lending us his instruments anymore. But we managed to make that little nine dollar gig.

**PART TWO will continue  
in Issue No. 6.**

**LOUIE BLUIE (the film) is available (uncut and uncensored) on video tape through me: Terry Zwigoff, 290 Mullen Ave., San Francisco, CA 94110 (415) 647-5278—or Pacific Arts Video, 50 N. La-Cienega Blvd., Beverly Hills, CA 90218—for \$39.95 postpaid. Please note that the version broadcast nationally on television last year was heavily censored. If you saw it that way, you missed a lot. Schools, festivals, museums, and other such groups can call me, if interested in renting a print for screenings.**



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## SELECTED ITEMS OF MUSICAL MATTERS DRAWN FROM THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Painstakingly  
researched from  
microfilm by Lynn  
Abbott, Ray Funk  
and Doug Seroff

EDITED  
AND  
BRIEFLY  
ANNOTATED  
by DOUG  
SEROFF

One hundred years ago there was no music known as "blues," "jazz," or "gospel"; the term "rag-time" had not yet been coined. Nevertheless, there was a wealth of distinctive black folk and popular music. It was as eclectic as any music could possibly be and it contained the seeds of every music style that would presently emerge. There are no sound recordings to preserve the sounds of this era, but the black press had already begun to serve as a significant chronicler. Some inkling of the scope and variety, and a fair picture of the most successful manifestations of black entertainment in 1889 are preserved in press reportage. The following items appeared in the black community press from June through December of 1889:

**JUNE 1, 1889:** ("New York City News" column) "The Young People's Association connected with Abyssinia Baptist Church gave a highly

interesting entertainment. The choruses were rendered with great effect. The male quartet acquitted themselves with usual honors in their rendition of 'The Huntsman's Horn' (New York Age)

**JUNE 8, 1889:** (New Bedford, Mass.) "The Salem Baptist Church opened their annual May festival last Wednesday evening with a war concert. A chorus of twenty-five voices, under the direction of Sergeant William Carney, sang very well, and Prof. T.W. Jackson rendered several comic songs he used to sing in war times on his autoharp." (New York Age)

**JUNE 15, 1889:** "Sin Killer Griffin is organizing a Gospel army of colored Baptists at Denison, Texas for the invasion of Africa." (New York Age, reproduced from Waterbury American)

NOTE: It seems likely that this is the same Sin Killer Griffin who was recorded in Texas in 1934, for the Library of Congress.



From The Perls Collection

STREET IN NEW ORLEANS—C. 1890



**JULY 6, 1889:** (Orange, New Jersey) "At Music Hall on last Friday night, the performance by the Theodore Drury Operatic Concert Company was excellently rendered. The costumes were exquisite, and there was no occasion for criticism. Everyone seemed to enjoy the evening's entertainment. The only drawback was the conduct of a number of white lads in the hall, who would, in case of applause, stamp their feet, yell and whistle. The statement of several New York papers and the *Sunday Call* of Newark, that the scenery and plays of the company were in some way defective, or disgusting, were utterly without foundation" (*New York Age*)

**JULY 13, 1889:** (Boston) "Mr. Hamilton, with four young men from Tuskegee Normal School in Alabama, is here raising money for the school by giving concerts. They sang for the Sunday school of the 12th Baptist Church to the great delight of the children." (*New York Age*)

**AUGUST 3, 1889:** "A quartette has lately been organized in Providence, R. I. known as the East India Quartette. The following are the members: Alex B. Parker, tenor; D. B. Parker, soprano; F. S. Brown, baritone; W. R. Brown, basso. They will take to the road in the fall. The Twilight Banjo and Guitar Quartette will assist B. F. Lightfoot in a recital to be given in Town Hall, Jamestown, R. I. next Monday. This quartette is composed of J. S. Brown, J. H. Barnett, banjoists; W. J. Brown, J. H. Easton, guitarists (of Providence, R. I.)." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

**AUGUST 10, 1889:** (Kaaterskill, N. Y.) "The first musical of the season was given by Mrs. Martha Weems. Guitar duet, A. Bohler and A. L. Morton; trio, Mrs. M. Weems, Miss Sadie Turpin, and Mrs. Victoria Miller; original selections, Dudley B. Clark; selection, Kaaterskill Quartet; Whistling solo, Miss Nellie May; the closing piece was sung by Miss Mary Brown, assisted by the quartet." (*New York Age*)

**AUGUST 10, 1889:** "...an enterprising Negro named Sam Anderson... is a native of South Carolina, who went to Europe some years ago with a minstrel troupe. The

## TO-NIGHT'S PROGRAMME

— AS RENDERED BY —

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## PROGRAMME

### PART I.

Piano Solo.....Mrs. Carter  
Opening Chorus.....Nashville Students  
"Jubilee Greeting".....Miss Gertie Heathcock  
"Jolly Times".....Fred. T. Carey  
Melody (selected).....Miss Cora L. Watson  
"Dar's a Jubilee".....Miss Clara Bell Carey  
Bass Solo (as requested).....J. A. Hagerman  
"Ding Dong Bells".....John M. Lewis  
"De Massa Ob De Sheepfol".....William Carter  
"Swing Does Gates Ajar".....J. A. Hagerman  
"Gospel Train's Arrival".....Miss Heathcock and Company

### PART II.

Nashville Male Quartette.....(In Selections)  
Soprano Solo (selected).....Miss Cora L. Watson  
Fred. T. Carey.....(In his Album of Vocal Gems)  
Tenor Solo (selected).....J. M. Lewis  
Miss Clara Bell Carey, the Nashville Nightingale.....(In Selections)  
Baritone Solo (selected).....W. Carter  
"The Exodusters" (Duet in Costumes).....Miss Gertie Heathcock and J. A. Hagerman

### PART III.

"Good-Bye My Honey, I'm Gone".....Fred. T. Carey  
"Daniel Saw the Stone Roll".....W. Carter  
"The Christmas Dinner".....Miss Clara Bell Carey  
"Pick Up De Young Jacobs".....Miss Gertie Heathcock  
Jubilee Song (selected).....Miss Cora L. Watson  
"We Got a Debt for to Pay".....J. A. Hagerman  
"Day Light's A Breaking".....John M. Lewis  
"The Salvation Army".....By Company

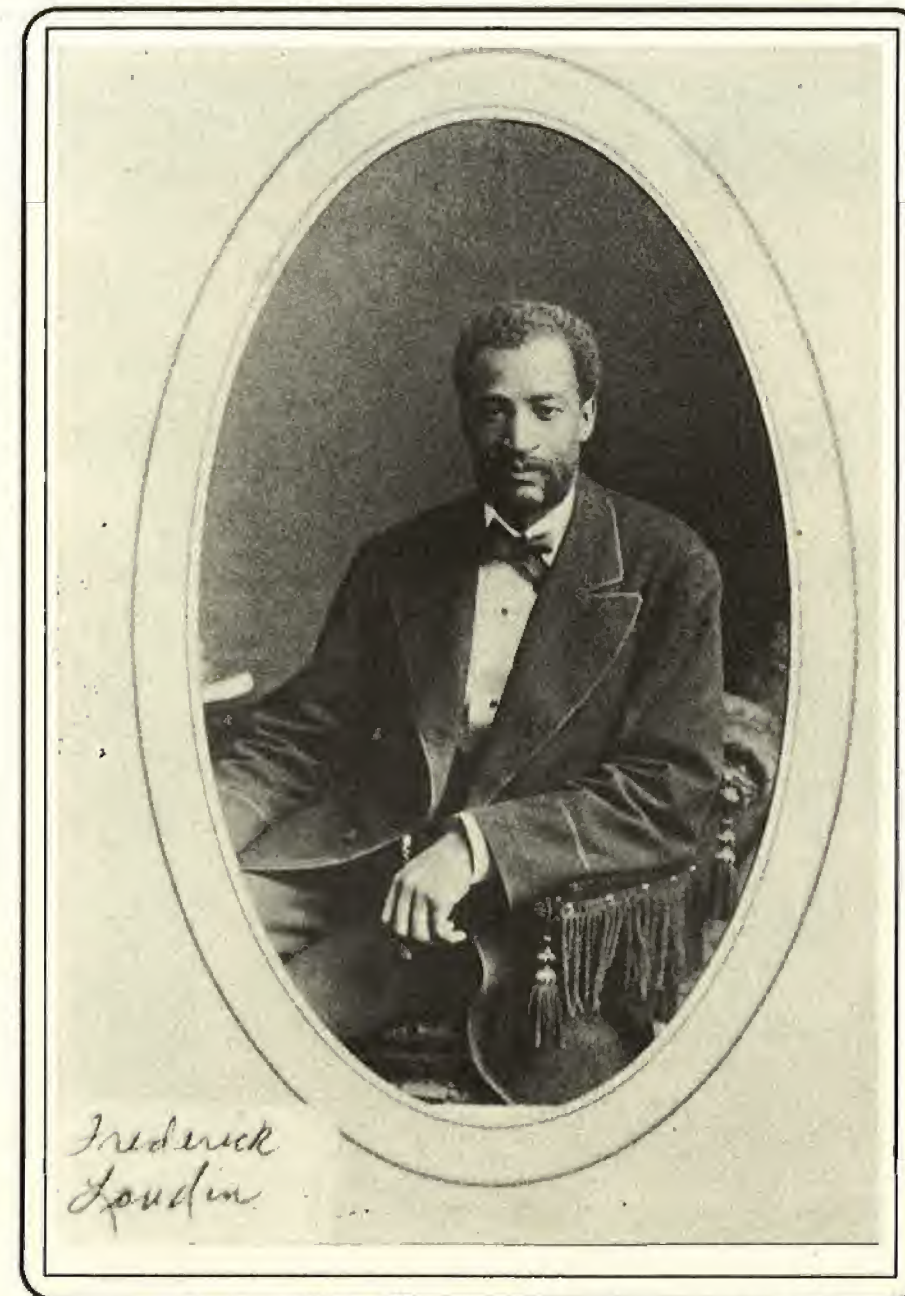
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THE 1890-1891 SEASON

courtesy of DOUG SEROFF



FREDERICK J. LOUDIN—Basso & Proprietor  
of Loudin's Fisk Jubilee Singers

company got stranded and brought up in France. In the course of his wanderings he has learned to speak two or three foreign languages, and in Nantes, he married a French woman who owned a restaurant and a concert hall and is now her business manager. He is a shrewd, enterprising man in his way, and his black skin does not go against him at all in France." (*New York Age*)

**AUGUST 10, 1889:** (Oneida, N.Y.) "A regular praise meeting was held last Sunday evening at the A. M. E.

Zion Church. The exercises consisted of prayers and exhortations, singing of plantation melodies, jubilee and gospel songs." (*New York Age*)

**AUGUST 17, 1889:** "Mrs. Rosetta Smith of 228 Sullivan Street (NYC) is still traveling with the Norfolk Jubilee Singers, of which she is the leading soprano singer. The troupe is having great success. Mrs. Smith is one of the leading singers of Bethel Choir." (*New York Age*)

NOTE: The group mentioned here

certainly had no connection with the Norfolk Jubilee Quartet, who were organized shortly after World War I.

**AUGUST 17, 1889:** (Saratoga Springs, N. Y.) "There will be a harmonica contest between J. Hawkins and L. Jackson...Mr. Richard Marks the colored basso, and Luke Pulley of N.Y.C. are reaping harvests around the hotels here with their excellent concerts. Mr. Pulley is an excellent pianist, and Mr. Marks is a drawing card wherever he goes." (*New York Age*)

**AUGUST 17, 1889:** (Syracuse, N.Y.) "Mr. Alonzo Prime became insane last Sunday morning, while attending lovefeast at Zion Church, and was taken to the County Asylum. His recovery is considered doubtful. Overtaxing his mind on the subject of religion is the cause of his insanity." (*New York Age*)

**AUGUST 31, 1889:** "Mr. Loudin and his companions of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, so long and favorably known at Chautauqua, are at present in New South Wales and have sent to the sufferers of the Johnstown calamity the proceeds of a benefit concert amounting to \$800. The troupe will soon go to India, and thence home via China, Japan, and the Sandwich Islands, and spend several months on the Pacific coast." (*New York Age*, reproduced from *Chautauqua Assembly Herald*)

**SEPTEMBER 7, 1889:** (Jamaica, N. Y., at Emancipation Day exercises) "A band of vocalists with guitars and banjos, sang through the village in the afternoon, to the great delight of all who heard them. Their voices harmonized finely and the effect was excellent." (*New York Age*)

**SEPTEMBER 7, 1889:** (Poughkeepsie, N. Y.) "The grove meeting at Wiley's Grove on August 11, was one of the largest and most successful ever held. There must have been 5,000 or more on the ground and the best of order was observed during the services. The meeting was under the direction of Rev. Adam Jackson. The singing by an excellent jubilee troupe from New York City was a feature of the meeting." (*New York Age*)

**SEPTEMBER 8, 1889:** "The only bone soloist who imitates the washer



**Sam**  
CELEBRATED

**Hague's**  
ORIGINAL

**Slave Troupe**

THIS PROGRAMME  
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MESSRS. WHEATLEY AND TRAYNOR

MR. FRED NEVILLE  
AND HIS BANJO

THE WISKS!!  
LES DEUX DIABLES  
EN LEUR GRAND ACT FANTASTIQUE

MINSTREL POSTER—1891

woman, horse-carts, cow-bells and rain drops with any exactness and precision is George Brown. It is indeed a treat to hear him." (*New York Age*)

NOTE: *Mimetic instrumental entertainment was characteristic of this era.*

**SEPTEMBER 28, 1889:** (Saratoga Springs, N. Y.) "Within ten days Saratoga will be blessed with two companies performing 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.'" (*New York Age*)

**OCTOBER 4, 1889:** "The World was serenaded this morning by three colored youths, who are called the Twin Brothers' Band. They play on two guitars, a fiddle, a mouth organ, and a call bell, and really made delightful music. The 'Twin' who played the guitar, mouth organ and call bell, the last named with his foot, had but one arm. He manipulated the guitar by a stick tied up to his stump. The violinist imitated the mocking bird to perfection. After rendering a number of arias, they departed begging the World to say, however, that they can be engaged for balls, dancing schools, etc." (*Detroit Plaindealer*, reproduced from *Charleston World*)

**OCTOBER 12, 1889:** (New Bedford, Conn.) "The Whaling City Quartet will give a concert in the Zion Church." (*New York Age*)

**OCTOBER 19, 1889:** ("New York City News" column) "The concert given at Zion A. M. E. Church by Mme. Mathilda S. Jones and company on Tuesday evening was one of the finest ever given in this city. The ease and grace of Mme. Jones' execution was something wonderful. It is to be regretted that there were not more present to hear her." (*New York Age*)

NOTE: *Mathilda Sissiereta Jones had only recently been dubbed "The Black Patti." She vaulted into the national spotlight following a successful tour of the West Indies as prima donna of the Tennessee Jubilee Singers. She became the premier black songstress of the late nineteenth century.*

**OCTOBER 19, 1889:** (Boston) "The concert given by Miss Ednorah Nahar at the Charles Street Church

was unfortunate in occurring in a very stormy and disagreeable evening, and the audience was lessened thereby. The program was a bright and attractive one, with such names as Miss Nahar, Mrs. Fenderson, and Dr. Shuebruk well known to Boston audiences, assisted by such promising young musicians as Miss Cora Lee Watson, Mr. Moses Hodges, Mr. Joseph Douglass and Miss Gertrude Thompson, the whistler." (*New York Age*)

NOTE: *The latter named artists lived up to their promise. Cora Lee Watson later sang with Thearle's Original Nashville Students, a well known jubilee troupe. Baritone Moses Hamilton Hodges became a member of O. M. McAdoo's Virginia Jubilee Singers and he sang with that company in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand during the 1890s. Joseph Douglass, grandson of Frederick Douglass, was one of the most celebrated black violinists of the following decade.*

**NOVEMBER 9, 1889:** "On Sunday a.m. Oct. 20th a concert company under the management of Miss Florence Williams of the *New York Age*, known as the New York Star Concert Company sailed by steamship Athos for Kingston, Jamaica. They intend to visit West Indies, South and Central America. Mme. M.S. Jones, one of the finest Prima Donna's of the race, styled 'Black Patti' was to have gone as star. But we are informed owing to a refusal on the part of the manager of the company to sign some certain contract the Mme. would not leave her home at Providence, R. I. So Mme. Allen of New York a singer of very little Providence was engaged to fill her place.

Mr. and Mrs. Randolph who was also to (sic.) with the party accepted an engagement to travel in Canada; however, a party of eight was made up; those we know of are Miss India Bell of Providence, Messrs. Jerry Lightfoot, and W. Watts, New Bedford, Mass. Success to them." ("TRAGE" in *Indianapolis Freeman*)

**NOVEMBER 9, 1889:** "The Griswold U. T. C. Co. which was organized at Chicago last week has among its members the Imperial

Colored Quartette. They are booked for 21 weeks and will visit California and British Columbia." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

NOTE: "U. T. C. Co" = *Uncle Tom's Cabin Company*.

**NOVEMBER 23, 1889:** (New Haven, Conn., at Zion A. M. E. Church): "The Olio Quartet was noted for its fine harmony and excellent time...Mme. M. O. Bell, Miss Mamie Ricks, Messrs. John Q. Anthony and William T. Blount." (*New York Age*)

NOTE: *Mixed gender quartets were often employed as "choirs" in African Methodist Episcopal churches during the nineteenth century.*

**NOVEMBER 23, 1889:** "A letter from a citizen of Kingston, Jamaica says that the New York Star Concert Company is having a very poor season, and that the citizens are by no means pleased with the company, with the exception of Miss Allen and Mr. Watts." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

**NOVEMBER 29, 1889:** "Hampton Visitors—Gen. S. C. Armstrong of the Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute of Hampton, VA., accompanied by four Afro-American singers and two Indians from Dakota, spent Monday in (Detroit). In the evening an interesting exposition of his work was given at the Woodward Ave. Baptist Church, and addresses were made by the Indian students and two of the Afro-American young men. The exercises were made more interesting by the excellent singing of the Quartet, and a fine impression was made by the practical evidence of the noble work being accomplished at Hampton. The Singers left Tuesday afternoon for Ann Arbor, where they will give an entertainment at University Hall. The gentlemen composing the Quartet are Messrs. Boykin, Daggs, Wainwright and Clayton." (*Detroit Plaindealer*)

NOTE: *Basso J.N. Wainwright joined the famous Hampton Institute Quartette in 1889, the article above may be describing his first tour with the group. Wainwright's remarkable career with this quartet continued until his retirement in 1937!*



**DECEMBER 6, 1889:** Article in the *Detroit Plaindealer* reports on the program given as Thanksgiving entertainment by the Meykli and Minuet Social Clubs, which included mixed quartets, orchestral pieces, tableaux, readings, and a "grand chorus." This entertainment was given under the direction of Miss Azalia Smith. Miss Smith, later known as Mme. E. Azalia Hackley, became one of the premier black women in American music. After earning an international reputation as a concert soloist, she championed a very effective crusade for the perpetuation of black folk music, holding festivals, contests, and lectures in many cities across the U. S. Azalia Smith Hackley was a native of Detroit.

**DECEMBER 7, 1889:** "The Hyer Sisters, although not as popular as a few years ago, are doing a good business in the far West." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

**NOTE:** The Hyer Sisters' popularity predates even that of the original Fisk Jubilee Singers, alongside whom they appeared at the historic second World's Peace Jubilee in Boston, in June 1872.

**DECEMBER 7, 1889:** "There are two companies of Nashville Students now on the road, and both travelling in the state of Missouri." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

**NOTE:** Refers to P. T. Wright's Nashville Students, and Thearle's Original Nashville Students. Neither troupe had any known connection to Nashville. Thearle's company was organized in Chicago, and Wright was also an Illinois native.

**DECEMBER 14, 1889:** "Miss Florence Williams, manager of the New York Concert Company, which sailed for the West Indies on October 20th, is expected to arrive in New York on Wednesday in search of some new talent for her company, which does not seem to be giving entire satisfaction." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

**DECEMBER 14, 1889:** "Mr. Louis L. Brown, of Green's Minstrels, who is considered by many musical critics as being the finest colored baritone singer in America, is negotiating for a trip to the West Indies. Mr. Brown proved a success in that

country on his previous tour, which ended last February." (*Indianapolis Freeman*)

**DECEMBER 21, 1889:** (Springfield, Mass.) "The Maryland Jubilee Singers went to Holyoke... These jubilee singers are led by Mr. Howard J. Williams and wife. They offered to give their church a sacred concert last Sunday night, and, because the pastor objected to charging an admission of 15¢ for the paying of the singers, they would not sing." (*New York Age*)

**DECEMBER 28, 1889:** (Troy, N.Y.) "The Eastern Star Troupe of jubilee singers gave an old fashioned jubilee concert for the benefit of A.M.E. Zion Church. Their renditions of old time plantation songs were excellent." (*New York Age*)

The clippings reproduced here are by no means "comprehensive," they are merely a sampling. It must be mentioned that the most sensational and portentous black music news story of 1889 is barely touched on here. In February 1889, J. R. Smith's Tennessee Jubilee Singers returned to the U. S., concluding a remarkable six-month tour of the West Indies and Central America. The troupe was received with enormous enthusiasm at all stops, much of it directed toward their prima donna soprano, 24-year old Matilda Sissieretta Jones, known as the "Black Patti." This was the Black Patti's first professional tour, and it effectively launched her brilliant career. The outrageous behavior of (white) manager James R. Smith, and the fate of the company after their return home, was the subject of a great deal of press coverage throughout 1889, including a four-part interview with Tennessee Jubilee Singers' tenor Will Pierce, which appeared in the *Indianapolis Freeman* during June and July. This tour, and its aftermath, were one of the critical events in late nineteenth century African-American entertainment history. Unfortunately, it is too complex to be given piecemeal in the present format, and so it has been for the most part passed over. Newspaper articles of November and December 1889, regarding the ill-fated West Indian tour of the New York Star Concert Company, de-

scribe an attempt to duplicate the Tennessee Jubilee Singers' successes.

Professional black music companies were expanding their horizons by broad leaps, stepping boldly into the 1890s, a decade that saw black American music firmly established as the world's premier popular music.

#### Pre-publication information on THE BANJO ON RECORD

*THE BANJO ON RECORD* is a discography, with biographies of major players—complemented by essays on historical development, manufacture, performance styles, and instrumental techniques.

*THE BANJO ON RECORD* is a listing of all cylinders and 78 rpm disc records (but not microgrooves) on which the banjo can be heard in a solo role, regardless of the type of music.

*THE BANJO ON RECORD* is a discopaedia naming all performers worldwide known to have recorded during the pre-microgroove era.

We're interested in hearing from record and film collectors, musicians, historians, archivists, musicologists, and just about anyone with information on the banjo. This information will enable us to estimate the amount of printing needed to make a pre-publication offer. A publisher has been lined up. However, the book won't be ready before 1990. Please contact: Dr. Rainer E. Lotz, Jean Paul Str. 6, 5300 Bonn 2, West Germany.

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## WHEN THE WOLF KNOCKED ON VICTOR'S DOOR. . .

by  
DICK  
SPOTTSWOOD







The Depression comes  
to VICTOR  
(a view from the  
bottom)...

**D**espite its history of corruption and some well-known examples of payoffs, popular music has come to value itself by marketplace statistics and chart positions. Sloppy historians frequently ascribe the million-record-seller (a convenient barometer of success) to unlikely—and unprovable—factors from the past.

This study of Victor Records concentrates on the other end of the scale. The years from 1930 to 1934 were the worst in the short history of sound recording. No company besides Victor emerged intact from those years. Victor itself survived only because founder Eldridge Johnson had sold his interest in 1927 to individuals who eventually placed the company under the wing of the flourishing Radio Corporation of America (RCA), whose radio profits helped counter losses from its record sales.

Ironically, many recordings from this era have become classics, from Stokowski's ambitious 14-disc set of Arnold Schönberg's *Gurrelieder* to Bing Crosby's initial pop successes. Our focus here is on items from the "race" and "hillbilly" lists, which rarely rivalled pop music or Red Seal sales even before the Depression. A combination of falling

commodity prices and boll weevil invasions had already put the agricultural South in a perilous position; Wall Street failures simply compounded the problems. Nonetheless, America's minorities continued to create vital music, and the diminished amount which found its way to recordings is all the more valuable. So are the pressings themselves, whose value increases in proportion to their actual or perceived scarcity.

In the early days of the Victor Talking Machine Company, a file was begun, consisting of one card per side of each pressing. Information on the cards typically includes matrix and release numbers, title, and composer credits, performance description, matrix testing data, and other appropriate data. Sometime, apparently in 1933, sales figures were added to cards, perhaps as a prelude to the introduction of the Bluebird B-5000 series in April. The latest tallies for "race," hillbilly, and pop figures are indicated for release groups on December 16, 1932, January 13 and 17, 1933, respectively. During 1933, the catalog was trimmed mercilessly with special attention paid to slow sellers in the 23,000 series, most of which were deleted by the time Victor's 1934 catalog was published in the summer of that year. Some were recycled onto lower-priced Bluebird and Montgomery Ward reissues; most were never heard of again except in collector want lists.

It is not exactly clear what these sales figures mean. Do they represent actual over-the-counter sales at retail shops or only copies pressed and shipped in expectation of sales? What was the company's policy for returns—and were returns subtracted from totals? Do figures represent total sales at the time of deletion or only as of a certain date? Note that a number of items still available in 1934 are given 1933 figures.

Ultimately, the value of these figures lies in the affirmation of what we already know—23,000 series issues are scarce and some are a great deal scarcer than others. The totals also serve as a rough measure of declining sales rates as the country plunged further into depression. Certain artists, notably Jimmie Rodg-

ers and the Carter Family, still commanded loyalty among their pre-Depression fans, even when the purchase of one of their 75¢ discs strained already slender resources. In the "race" lists, no single artist enjoyed a comparable following, although novelties and 'Tin Pan Alley hits by the Washboard Rhythm Kings enjoyed cross-over appeal and sold well.

It might help to give a chronology of Victor's handling of its minority catalogs during these troubled years. Clearly, marketing strategies varied and conflicted. The last and most successful strategy was to put race, hillbilly, Mexican-American, Acadian-French, Irish, and calypso material into a lower-priced series with a label of its own. Other ethnic minority material remained on Victor for the most part.

**January, 1929**—Various V-series begin. They are used to classify minority material previously in the 21,000/81,000 series. A special 46,000 series is created for Spanish language records, concluding with 46,999 in January, 1931. V-38,000 series releases appear from January 8, 1929 to August 15, 1930. Foreign language V-series continue through 1942.

**April, 1929**—A V-38,500 (Victor Race Records) series is created, to be distinguished from V-38,000 (Victor Red Hot Dance Tune Records). Releases appear from April 5, 1929 through December 12, 1930.

**September, 1929**—Jimmie Rodgers is removed from the V-40,000 series (after four releases). His records appear in the regular domestic lists (22,072—22,554) through January 1931, and in the 23,500 series thereafter.

**December, 1929**—Cajun discs appear in Victor's 22,000 domestic series.

**September, 1930**—After Victor V-38,146, the 23,000 series replaces the V-38,000 series. Victor 23,001 (King Oliver) is released September 12; Victor 23,000 (McKinney) is released October 3. The series continues through April 10, 1931. It's called variously, "Hot," "Hot Dance," or "Red Hot Dance." The final release, Victor 23,041, is by Duke Ellington.



1934 SAW THE END OF VICTOR'S EXPERIMENTAL SUNRISE LABEL

**January 1931**—After final releases in the V-38,500 and V-40,000 series in December, the 23,000 series expands to include Victor's race and country catalogs. Victor 23,250 (Walter Davis) is released January 23; 23,500 (Bud Billings—aka Frank Luther) is released January 2. Victor 23,432 (Tiny Parham) is released January 24, 1934; 23,859 (Prairie Ramblers) is released either in December, 1933 or January, 1934. Two successful Duke Ellington releases appear on Victor 22,586 and 22,587, including "Mood Indigo" (see p. 76).

**March 1931**—"Red Hot Dance" releases begin to appear in the domestic 22,000 series as the 23,000-23,041 series closes. The first non-23,000 releases are 22,628 by McKinneys Cotton Pickers and 22,629 by Snooks' Memphis Ramblers, released on March 27 and April 10, respectively.

**March 1933**—Bluebird B-5000 is released, coupling reissues of two popular Jimmie Rodgers titles. Bluebird is the culmination of previous experiments with budget labels, including Sunrise, Timely Tunes, and Electradisk, along with Eli Ober-

stein's Crown, Homestead, and (briefly) Gem labels. Documentation for these labels survives in the RCA files, though these labels, operative while Oberstein was in the company's employ, had an unclear administrative relationship with Victor. Only Sunrise lasts into the first few months of Bluebird releases and ends with the demise of the 23,000 series early in 1934.

**April 1933**—Bluebird B-5001 through approximately B-5050 are released, using both new and reissued material from the popular, race, and country catalogs. File cards for





courtesy of BOB HILBERT

B-5035 through B-5075 are marked "Woolworth," suggesting that the chain may initially have had exclusive retail rights.

Whatever the initial intentions of RCA's Bluebird B-5000 series may have been, the end of the 23,000 series meant that new race and hill-billy releases would join the company's second-string pop artists in its 35¢ retail line.

RCA's last Depression field trip to the South was to Atlanta and Dallas—from February 2 to 29, 1932. More material for both the 23,000 series and Bluebird was recorded in Chicago in August and December, 1933 (these probably were actual field trips, since RCA does not seem to have had permanent facilities in Chicago at the time). The next trip south was in March-April 1934, to San Antonio, resuming the pattern for collecting music from minority artists which lasted through the 1950s.

Victor 23,250 (released: January 23, 1931) WALTER DAVIS—Blue Sea Blues/Broke And Hungry—SALES: 3231.

Victor 23,251 (same) MEMPHIS JUG BAND—Papa's Got Your Bath Water On/Fourth Street Mess Around—SALES: 765.

Victor 23,252 (same) BESSEMER MELODY BOYS—Didn't They Crucify My Lord/When I Get Home—SALES: 800.

Victor 23,253 (same) TEDDY BUNN-SPENCER WILLIAMS—Chicken And The Worm/Tampa Twirl—SALES: 526.

Victor 23,254 (same) WILBUR SWEATMAN—Got 'Em Blues/Battleship Kate—SALES: 604.

Victor 23,255 (same) CLIFFORD GIBSON—Old Time Rider/Brooklyn

Blues—SALES: 621.

Victor 23,256 (released: February 13, 1931) MEMPHIS SHEIKS (Memphis Jug Band)—He's In The Jailhouse Now/Round And Round—SALES: 1212.

Victor 23,257 (same) BUSTER AND JACK (Jack Cawley's Oklahoma Ridge Runners)—Guitar Duet Blues/Slow Guitar Blues (also released on 23,540 May 8, 1931)—SALES: 794.

Victor 23,258 (same) BLIND WILLIE REYNOLDS—Married Man Blues/Third Street Woman Blues—SALES: 639.

Victor 23,259 (same) WILLIE KELLY (Roosevelt Sykes)—Don't Put The Lights Out/Kelly's Special—SALES: 864.

Victor 23,260 (same) FATS WALLER—Loveless Love/That's All—SALES: 1103.

Jubilee—SALES: 811.

Victor 23,265 (released: April 24, 1931) ALABAMA SHEIKS—Lawdy Lawd Blues/Travelin' Railroad Man Blues—SALES: 529.

Victor 23,266 (same) NOAH LEWIS'S JUG BAND—Bad Luck's My Buddy/New Minglewood Blues—SALES: 628.

Victor 23,267 (same) CAROLINA PEANUT BOYS (Memphis Jug Band)—You May Leave, But This Will Bring You Back/Got A Letter From My Darlin'—SALES: 1003.

Victor 23,268 (same) GITFIDDLE JIM (Kokomo Arnold)—Paddlin' Madeline Blues/Rainy Night Blues—SALES: 473.

Victor 23,269 (released: May 22, 1931) FIVE RHYTHM KINGS (Washboard Rhythm Kings)—Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone/Minnie The Moocher—SALES: 3536.



1917 SOLD

Victor 23,261 (released: March 27, 1931) ALABAMA SHEIKS—Sittin' On Top Of The World/The New Talking 'Bout You—SALES: 1917.

Victor 23,262 (same) CANNON'S JUG STOMPERS—Bring It With You When You Come/Money Never Runs Out—SALES: 605.

Victor 23,263 (same) WILLIE KELLY—Side Door Blues/You Can't Win—SALES: 696.

Victor 23,264 (same) DOUGLAS WILLIAMS AND HIS ORCHESTRA—The Beale Street Sheik/Darktown

Victor 23,270 (same) WILLIE KELLY—Big Time Woman/Thanksgiving Blues—SALES: 839.

Victor 23,271 (same) BLIND CLYDE CHURCH—Number Nine Blues/Pneumatic Blues—SALES: 481.

Victor 23,272 (same) CANNON'S JUG STOMPERS—Wolf River Blues/Prison Wall Blues—SALES: 576.

Victor 23,273 (released: June 19, 1931) HATTIE HART—Won't You Be Kind To Me?/You Wouldn't, Would You, Papa?—SALES: 409.



385 SOLD

Victor 23,274\* (same) CAROLINA PEANUT BOYS—Move That Thing/You Got Me Rollin'—SALES: 1713.

Victor 23,275 (same) SHREVEPORT HOME WRECKERS—Fence Breakin' Blues/Home Wreckin' Blues—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,276 (same) FIVE RHYTHM KINGS—One More Time/Walkin' My Baby Back Home—SALES: 1333.

Victor 23,277 (released: July 17, 1931) TAYLOR'S DIXIE SERENADERS—Wabash Blues/Everybody Loves My Baby—SALES: 1631.

Victor 23,278 (same) KAISER CLIFTON—Cash Money Blues/Fort Worth And Denver Blues—SALES: 767.

Victor 23,279\* (same) THE RHYTHM KINGS (Washboard Rhythm Kings)—You Salty Dog/Call Of The Freaks—SALES: 3430.

Victor 23,280 (same) "BEANS" HAMBONE-EL MORROW—Beans/Tippin' Out—SALES: 385.

Victor 23,281 (same) LIZZIE MILES—The Man I Got Ain't The Man I Want/My Man O' War—"special to jobbers" 6/19/31—SALES: 1072.

Victor 23,282 (released: August 28, 1931) WALTER DAVIS—That Stuff You Sell Ain't No Good/What Makes Me Love You So?—SALES: 1095.

Victor 23,283 (same) THE RHYTHM KINGS—Please Tell Me/Who Stole

The Lock—SALES: 2464.

Victor 23,284 (same) JOHN HARRIS—Prowling Wolf Blues/Glad And Sorry Blues—SALES: 587.

Victor 23,285 (same) CHICAGO HOT FIVE (Washboard Rhythm Kings)—Stardust/You Can't Stop Me From Lovin' You—SALES: 2291.

Victor 23,286 (released: September 25, 1931) WILLIE KELLY—As True As I've Been To You/Don't Squeeze Me Too Tight—SALES: 840.

Victor 23,287 (same) LOUISVILLE SANCTIFIED SINGERS—God Give Me A Light/So Glad I'm Here—SALES: 447.

Victor 23,288 (same) R.T. HANEN—She's Got Jordan River In Her Hips/Happy Days Blues—SALES: 391.

Victor 23,289 (same) THE MELODY FOUR (Washboard Rhythm Kings)—Because I'm Yours Sincerely/I'm Crazy 'Bout My Baby—SALES: 441.

Victor 23,290 (same) CLIFFORD GIBSON—She Rolls 'Em Slow/Railroadman Blues—SALES: 690.

Victor 23,291 (released: October 23, 1931) WALTER DAVIS—Sunny Land Blues/You Don't Worry My Mind—SALES: 1263.

Victor 23,292 (same) WILTON CRAWLEY—Big Time Woman/She Saves Her Sweetest Smiles For Me—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,293 (same) KID COLEY—Clair And Pearley Blues/Tricks Ain't Walkin' No More—SALES: 339.

Victor 23,294 (same) FOUR GOSPEL SINGERS—Angels Shouting Glory, Just To Tell The Story/New Jerusalem—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,295 (same) WHITE AND HAIRISTON—The New 'Frisco Train/WASHINGTON WHITE—The Panama Limited—SALES: 412.

Victor 23,296 (released: November 20, 1931) REV. F.W. MCGEE—Women's Clothes/A Dog Shall Not Move His Tongue—SALES: 325.

Victor 23,297 (same) BEN FERGUSON—Try And Treat Her Right/Please Don't Holler, Mama—SALES: 450.

Victor 23,298 (same) LIZZIE MILES—Too Slow Blues/Electrician Blues—(NOT ISSUED).

Victor 23,299 (same) WILLIE KELLY—Nasty But It's Clean/You So Dumb—SALES: 420.

Victor 23,300 (same) CHICAGO HOT FIVE—Just One More Chance/Wake 'Em Up—SALES: 1781.

Victor 23,301\* (release date unknown) WASHBOARD RHYTHM KINGS—Blues In My Heart/Georgia On My Mind—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,302\* (released: December 18, 1931) WALTER DAVIS—M & O Blues No. 2/Mr. Davis Blues No. 2—SALES: 3971.

Victor 23,303 (same) WASHBOARD RHYTHM KINGS—Boola Boo/DOUGLAS WILLIAMS AND HIS ORCHESTRA—Thrill Me—SALES: 732.

Victor 23,304 (same) CHARLIE JORDAN—Working Man's Blues/Santa Claus Blues—SALES: 400.

Victor 23,305 (same) WHISTLER'S JUG BAND—Foldin' Bed/Hold That Tiger—SALES: 882.

Victor 23,306 (same) LIZZIE MILES—Done Threwed The Key Away/Electrician Blues—SALES: 361.

Victor 23,307 (released: January 15, 1932) JELLY ROLL MORTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA—Crazy Chords/Gambling Jack—SALES: 1262.

Victor 23,308 (same) WALTER DAVIS—Pleading To My Baby/Howling Wind Blues—SALES: 838.

Victor 23,309 (same) TAYLOR'S WEATHERBIRDS—Coal Camp Blues/Do You Love Me Blues—SALES: 380.

Victor 23,310 (same) BUCK FRANKLIN (Washboard Rhythm Kings)—Crooked World Blues/CHARLIE NICKERSON (Memphis Jug Band)—Going Back To Memphis—SALES: 293.

Victor 23,311 (same) TEDDY DARBY—Deceiving Blues/Built Right





619 SOLD

On The Ground—SALES: 262.

Victor 23,312\* (same) FOUR GOSPEL SINGERS—Do You Want To Be A Worker/Dry Bones—("special to Charlotte, North Carolina 12/16/31")—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,313 (released: February 26, 1932) WALTER DAVIS—Engineer's Blues/Strange Land Blues—SALES: 624.

Victor 23,314 (same) WALTER BROWN AND HIS ORCHESTRA—Oh! Mo'nah! I Don't Know Why (I Just Do)—SALES: 663.

Victor 23,315 (same) MEMPHIS MINNIE-KANSAS JOE—I Never Told A Lie/Don't Want No Woman—SALES: 990.

Victor 23,316 (same) GILMORE SISTERS—Some Of These Days/Rockin' Chair—SALES: 619.

Victor 23,317 (same) JIMMIE STRANGE—Quarter Splow Blues/No Limit Blues—SALES: 459.

Victor 23,318 (released: March 25, 1932) JOHN ESTES (actually James Rachell) Sweet Mama/Expressman Blues—SALES: 327.

Victor 23,319 (same) CAROLINA PEANUT BOYS (Memphis Jug Band)—Spider's Nest Blues/(Noah Lewis's Jug Band) Selling The Jelly—SALES: 240.

Victor 23,320 (same) WILLIE KELLY—No Settled Mind Blues/Hard Luck Man Blues—SALES: 266.

Victor 23,321 (same) JELLY ROLL MORTON AND HIS RED HOT PEP-

PERS—If Someone Would Only Love Me/Oil Well—SALES: 1211.

Victor 23,322 (same) JESSE (i.e. Henry) TOWNSEND—Take A Chance/No Home Blues—SALES: 358.



1211 SOLD

Victor 23,323 (released: April 22, 1932) WASHBOARD RHYTHM KINGS—Was That The Human Thing To Do?/If You Don't Love Me—SALES: 1514.

Victor 23,324 (same) ED CHAFER (i.e. Schaffer)-OSCAR WOODS—Flying Crow Blues/Nok-Em-All Blues—SALES: 109.

Victor 23,325 (same) WALTER DAVIS—Mama, Why Don't You Be Yourself?/Lonesome Hill Blues—SALES: 558.

Victor 23,326\* (same)—CHICAGO HOT FIVE—You Can Depend On Me/Oh! What A Thrill—SALES: 1498.

Victor 23,327 (same) JAMES "STUMP" JOHNSON—Sail On, Black Sue/Barrel Of Whiskey Blues—SALES: 285.

Victor 23,328 (released: May 20, 1932) RUBY GLAZE-HOT SHOT WILLIE (McTell)—Rollin' Mama Blues/Let Me Scoop For You—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,329 (same) EDDIE JOHNSON AND HIS CRACKER-JACKS—Good Old Bosom Bread/The Duck's Yas Yas Yas—SALES: 1040.

Victor 23,330 (same) PINETOP AND LINDBERG—East Chicago Blues/4 X 11 - 44—SALES: 195.

Victor 23,331 (same) THOMAS WALLER—Sugar/I Ain't Got Nobody—SALES: (no figure given).



195 SOLD

Victor 23,332 (same) RAMBLING THOMAS—Shake It, Gal/Ground Hog Blues—SALES: 327.

Victor 23,333\* (released: June 17, 1932) WALTER DAVIS—M & O Blues/Worried Man Blues—SALES: 1114.

Victor 23,334 (same) JELLY ROLL MORTON AND HIS RED HOT PEPPERS—Low Gravy/Mint Julep—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,335 (same) PERE DICKSON—Get Away From My Window/Red Hot Papa—SALES: 249.

Victor 23,336 (same) NOAH LEWIS—Like I Want To Be/DE FORD BAILEY—John Henry—SALES: 141.

Victor 23,337\* (same) DOUGLAS WILLIAMS AND HIS ORCHESTRA—Clarinet Jiggles/WASHBOARD RHYTHM KINGS—All This World Is Made Of Glass—SALES: 1255.

Victor 23,338 (released: July 15, 1932) HENRY ALLEN, JR. AND HIS ORCHESTRA—Singing Pretty Songs/I Fell In Love With You—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,339 (same) BILLIE YOUNG—When They Get Lovin' They's Gone/You Done Played Out Blues—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,340 (same) EMPIRE JUBILEE QUARTET—Wade In De Water/Where Shall I Be?—SALES: 144.

Victor 23,341 (same) FRANK STOKES—I'm Going Away Blues/Old Sometime Blues—SALES: 207.

Victor 23,342 (same) BENNIE MOTEN'S KANSAS CITY ORCHESTRA—Small Black/Rit Dlt Ray—SALES: 632.



(NO SALES FIGURE GIVEN) from the collection of CHARLES FLUDER

Victor 23,343\* (released: August 12, 1932) WALTER DAVIS—Hijack Blues/Blue Ghost Blues—SALES: 480.

Victor 23,344 (same) WILTON CRAWLEY—I'm Her Papa, She's My Mama/New Crawley Blues—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,345 (same) FURRY LEWIS—Dry Land Blues/Cannon Ball Blues—SALES: 148.

Victor 23,346 (same) CLIFFORD HAYES' LOUISVILLE STOMPERS—Tippin' Thru/Tenor Guitar Fiend—SALES: 237.

Victor 23,347 (same) MEMPHIS JUG BAND—Taking Your Place/Aunt Caroline Dyer Blues—SALES: 166.

Victor 23,348\* (released: September 9, 1932) WASHBOARD RHYTHM KINGS—Just Another Dream Of You/My Silent Love—SALES: 1911.

Victor 23,349 (same) VICTORIA SPIVEY - PORTER GRAINGER—Baulin' Water Blues-Part 1/Baulin' Water Blues-Part 2—SALES: 111.

Victor 23,350 (same) PACE JUBILEE SINGERS—A Little Talk With Jesus/Life Is Like A Mountain Railroad—SALES: 149.

Victor 23,351 (same) JELLY ROLL MORTON AND HIS RED HOT PEPPERS—Each Day/Strokin' Away—SALES: 490.

Victor 23,352 (same) MEMPHIS MINNIE-KANSAS JOE—I'm Going





LAST "RACE" VICTOR WITH SALES FIGURES (77 SOLD)

Back Home/Georgia Skin—SALES: 165.

Victor 23,353 (released: October 7, 1932) RUBY GLAZE—HOT SHOT WILLIE—Searching The Desert For The Blues/Lonesome Day Blues—SALES: 124.

Victor 23,354\* (same) PAUL HOWARD'S QUALITY SERENADERS—California Swing/Harlem—SALES: 1042.

Victor 23,355 (same) WALTER DAVIS—East Missouri Blues/Road Man Blues—SALES: 293.

Victor 23,356 (same) TATE AND MANTAN (Carroll Tate and Mantan Moreland)—That Reminds Me/Depression Of Prayer—SALES: 76.

Victor 23,357 (same) BENNIE MOLEN'S KANSAS CITY ORCHESTRA—Jones Law Blues/WASHBOARD RHYTHM KINGS—Depression Stomp—SALES: 793.

Victor 23,358 (released: November 4, 1932) NEW ORLEANS FEETWARMERS—I Want You Tonight/Lay Your Racket—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,359\* (same) PINETOP AND LINDBERG—Louisiana Bound/I Believe I'll Make A Change—SALES: 391.

Victor 23,360 (same) NEW ORLEANS FEETWARMERS—Sweetie Dear/Maple Rag (sic)—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,361 (same) SWEET PEASE (Addie Spivey)—Day Breaking Blues/Leaving You, Baby—SALES: 175.

Victor 23,362 (same) DOUGLAS WILLIAMS AND HIS ORCHESTRA—Memphis Gal/DOUGLAS WILLIAMS—Sister Ella—SALES: 326.

Victor 23,363 (released: November 18, 1932) PACE JUBILEE SINGERS—I'm Going Through Jesus!/What A Friend We Have In Jesus—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,364\* (same) WASHBOARD RHYTHM KINGS—I'm Gonna Play Down By The Ohio/Say It Isn't So—SALES: 1461.

Victor 23,365 (same) RAMBLING THOMAS—Ground Hog Blues/Little Old Mamma Blues—SALES: 208.

Victor 23,366 (same) REV. F.W. MCGEE—The Book Of Life/I Got To Leave Here—SALES: 135.

Victor 23,367\* (same) WASHBOARD RHYTHM KINGS—if You Were Only Mine/Ash Man Crawl—SALES: 972.

Victor 23,368\* (released: December 16, 1932) WASHBOARD RHYTHM KINGS—The Boy In The Boat/Somebody Stole Gabriel's Horn—SALES: 809.

Victor 23,369 (same) KID COLEY—Freight Train Blues/War Dream Blues—SALES: 69.

Victor 23,370 (same) THE FOUR WANDERERS—Animals Coming In/The Fault's In Me—SALES: 68.

Victor 23,371 (same) MEMPHIS STOMPERS—Stompin' Away/Gettin' The Bird—SALES: 242.

Victor 23,372 (same) CHARLIE JORDAN—Bad Breaks Blues/Greyhound Blues—SALES: 77.

*Further releases through January 24, 1934 show no sales figures.*

Victor 23,500 (released: January 2, 1931) BUD BILLINGS (Frank Luther)—The Fate Of The Fleagle Gang/He Was Once Some Mother's Boy—SALES: 3927.

Victor 23,501 (same) BLUE STEELE AND HIS ORCHESTRA—Missouri Moon/Worries On My Mind—SALES: 3955.

Victor 23,502 (same) CAROLINA TWINS (David Fletcher-Gwen Foster)—Since My Baby's Gone Away/I Want My Black Baby Back—SALES: 1735.

Victor 23,503\* (released: January 16, 1931) JIMMIE RODGERS—Blue Yodel No. 8/Jimmie's Mean Mama Blues—SALES: 2.

Victor 23,504 (released: January 2, 1931) PHIL CROW TRIO—I'm A-Gettin' Ready To Go/FRANK AND PHIL CROW—Abraham—SALES: 1886.

Victor 23,505 (released: January 16, 1931) LEWIS McDANIEL-GID SMITH—I Loved You So True/I Went To See My Sweetheart—SALES: 1494.

Victor 23,506 (same) DAVID McCARN—Take Them For A Ride/Poor Man, Rich Man (Cotton Mill Colic No. 2)—SALES: 1610.

Victor 23,507 (same) ALLEN BROTHERS—Price Of Cotton Blues/I'm Always Whistling The Blues—SALES: 2745.

Victor 23,508 (same) RAY BROTHERS—Got The Jake Leg Too/The Folks Back Home—SALES: 2229.

Victor 23,509 (released: February 13, 1931) FLEMING AND TOWNSEND—(Mama) What Makes You That Way/She's Always On My Mind—SALES: 5146.

Victor 23,510 (same) PEG MORELAND—I Got Mine/RADIO MAC (Harry McClintock)—Homespun Gal—SALES: 1503.

Victor 23,511 (same) GRINNELL GIGGERS—Gigger Waltz No. 2/Duck Shoes Rag—SALES: 1704.

Victor 23,512 (same) CARTWRIGHT BROTHERS—Pickaninny Lullaby/Mammy's Little Black-Eyed Boy—SALES: 1150.

Victor 23,513\* (released: February 13, 1931) CARTER FAMILY—On The Rock Where Moses Stood/Darling Nellie Across The Sea—SALES: 16,407.

Victor 23,514\* (released: February 27, 1931) ALLEN BROTHERS—A New Salty Dog/Preacher Blues—SALES: 6552.

Victor 23,515 (same) FRANK CRUMIT—Foolish Facts/What Kind Of Noise Annoys An Oyster?—SALES: 3010.

Victor 23,516 (same) CAROLINA TAR HEELS—Washing Mama's Dishes/Farm Girl Blues—SALES: 1804.

Victor 23,517\* (same) JIMMIE DAVIS—Arabella Blues/Bear Cat Mama From Horner's Corners—SALES: 9653.

Victor 23,518\* (released: March 13, 1931) JIMMIE RODGERS—Nobody Knows But Me/The Mystery Of Number Five—SALES: 28,959.

Victor 23,519 (same) FRANK STAMPS ALL STAR QUARTET—It Won't Be Long/VAUGHAN QUARTET—O Such Wondrous Love—SALES: 1607.

Victor 23,520 (same) FLEMING AND TOWNSEND—Something Got To Change Somewhere/I'll Tell You About The Women—SALES: 4207.

Victor 23,521\* (same) JACK CAWLEY'S OKLAHOMA RIDGE RUNNERS—White River Stomp/The Dawn Waltz—SALES: 4498.

Victor 23,522 (same) LEROY ROBERSON—Early, Early In The Spring/My Beaumont Mama Blues—SALES: 1360.

Victor 23,523\* (released: March 27, 1931) CARTER FAMILY—No More The Moon Shines On Lorena/Where Shall I Be?—SALES: 13,274.

Victor 23,524 (from German masters), no sales figure.

Victor 23,525 (released: March 27, 1931) JIMMIE DAVIS—Where The Old Red River Flows/Way Down In Arkansas—SALES: 3931.

Victor 23,526 (same) SLIM SMITH—Otto Wood, The Bandit/Bread Line Blues—SALES: 3138.

Victor 23,527 (same) POWDER RIVER JACK—KITTY LEE—Tying A Knot In The Devil's Tail/Powder River, Let 'Er Buck—SALES: 2158.

Victor 23,528 (released: April 10, 1931) HENDLEY AND SMALL—Shuffle, Feet, Shuffle/Tar And Feathers—SALES: 1582.

Victor 23,529 (released: April 24, 1931) BOB PALMER—JIMMY WHITE—Beautiful Northwest Country/My Blue Mountain Home In The West—SALES: 1497.

Victor 23,530 (released: April 10, 1931) GENE AUTRY—Money Ain't No Use Anyway/Bear Cat Papa Blues—SALES: 2802.

Victor 23,531 (same) HONEY DUKE AND HIS UKE (Johnny Marvin)—Underneath Those Weeping Willow Trees/I'm Looking For A Gal—SALES: 1380.

Victor 23,532 (same) DAVID

McCARN—Hobo Life/The Bashful Bachelor—SALES: 1142.

Victor 23,533 (same) BILL SIMMONS—The Cowboy's Plea/The Lonesome Cowboy—(Pacific Coast Special: February 22, 1931)—SALES: 849.

Victor 23,534 (same) BUD BILLINGS—Down In The Hills/BUD AND JOE BILLINGS (Frank Luther—Carson Robison)—My Heart Is Where The Mohawk Flows Tonight—SALES: 2593.

Victor 23,535\* (released: April 24, 1931) JIMMIE RODGERS—Mississippi River Blues/TB Blues—SALES: 47,355.

Victor 23,536\* (same) ALLEN BROTHERS—Mama Don't Allow No Low-Down Hanging Around/Maybe Next Week Sometime—SALES: 11,767.

Victor 23,537 (same) WHEELER AND LAMB—The Farmer Is The Man Who Feeds Them All/Jim Blake, The Engineer—SALES: 1201.

Victor 23,538\* (same) KING NA-WAHI'S HAWAIIANS—I Want To Dream By The Old Mill Stream/When The Moon Comes Over The Mountain—SALES: 4383.

Victor 23,539 (released: May 8, 1931) PEG MORELAND—In Berry Picking Time/BUD BILLINGS—Cornpone In Pot Likker—SALES: 1764.

Victor 23,540 (same) JACK CAWLEY'S OKLAHOMA RIDGE RUNNERS—Cross Tie Blues/Pouring Down Blues (also released on Victor 23,257, February 13, 1931)—SALES: 1317.

Victor 23,541\* (same) CARTER FAMILY—Lonesome Valley/The Birds Were Singing For You—SALES: 15,107.

Victor 23,542 (same) GEORGIA YELLOW HAMMERS—Childhood Days/No One To Welcome Me Home—SALES: 1252.

Victor 23,543 (same) FLEMING AND TOWNSEND—Drifting On/Goin' To Quit Drinkin' When I Die—SALES: 3840.

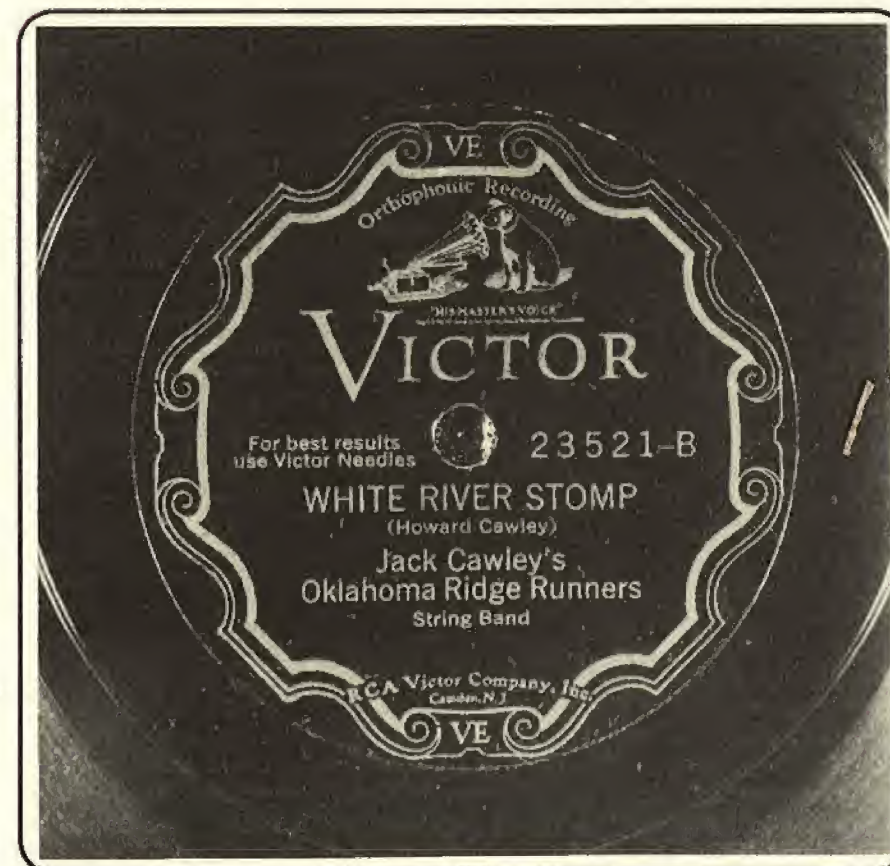
Victor 23,544 (released: May 22, 1931) JIMMIE DAVIS—A Woman's Blues/Penitentiary Blues—SALES: 3915.

Victor 23,545 (same) KING NA-WAHI HAWAIIANS—Queen Of The South Sea Isles (Pela Pupu)/Flowers Of The Islands—SALES: 2108.

Victor 23,546 (same) CAROLINA TAR HEELS—Your Low Down Dirty Ways/The Hen House Door Is Locked—SALES: 1409.

Victor 23,547 (same) EDDIE BELL (Frank Luther)—Stop Yer Playing/Divorce Blues—SALES: 1685.

Victor 23,548 (same) GENE AU-



4498 SOLD





4383 SOLD

TRY—Do Right Daddy Blues/That's How I Got My Start—SALES: 1901.

Victor 23,549\* (released: June 5, 1931) JIMMIE RODGERS—My Blue Eyed Jane/Jimmie The Kid—SALES: 36,540.

Victor 23,550 (same) BLIND ALFRED REED—There'll Be No Distinction There/Beware—SALES: 1580.

Victor 23,551 (same) ALLEN BROTHERS—Roll Down The Line/Old Black Cow In The Hickory Nut Tree—SALES: 1826.

Victor 23,552 (same) RAY BROTHERS—Mississippi Echoes/Tuscaloosa Waltz—SALES: 1365.

Victor 23,553 (same) FRANKIE MARVIN—Old Man Duff/I'm A Truthful Fellow—SALES: 1450.

Victor 23,554\* (released: June 19, 1931) CARTER FAMILY—There Is Someone A-Waiting For Me/Jimmie Brown, The Newsboy—SALES: 9490.

Victor 23,555 (same) DAVID McCARN—Gastonia Gallop/W.A. HINTON—Leather Britches—SALES: 757.

Victor 23,556 (same) BUD BILLINGS—Settin' By The Fire/Wolf At The Door—SALES: 1433.

Victor 23,557 (same) FLEMING AND TOWNSEND—The Ramblin' Boy/Me And The Moon And My Gal—SALES: 2125.

Victor 23,558 (same) THE FORMAN SISTERS—Let Me Rest/Oh, I Want To See Him—SALES: 799.

Victor 23,559 (released: July 3, 1931) JIMMIE DAVIS—Before You Say Farewell/I'll Be Happy Today—SALES: 2684.

Victor 23,560\* (same) CASEY'S OLD TIME FIDDLERS—Ocean Waves Waltz/Casey's Old Time Waltz—SALES: 1865.

Victor 23,561\* (same) FRANKIE MARVIN—When It's Night-Time In Nevada/GENE AUTRY—There's A Good Gal In The Mountains—SALES: 3782.

Victor 23,562 (same) BOB MCGIMSEY—Shadrach/Religion Ain't Nothing To Play With—SALES: 631.

Victor 23,563 (same) FLEMING AND TOWNSEND—I'm Leavin' This Town/Lookin' For A Mama—SALES: 3438.

Victor 23,564\* (released: July 17, 1931) JIMMIE RODGERS—I'm Lonesome Too/Travellin' Blues—SALES: 31,734.

Victor 23,565 (same) GRAYSON AND WHITTER—Never Be As Fast As I Have Been/Going Down The Lee Highway—SALES: 1385.

Victor 23,566 (same) DAVE AND HOWARD (McCarn & Long)—Fancy Nancy/Bay Rum Blues—SALES: 1634.

Victor 23,567\* (same) ALLEN BROTHERS—When You Leave You'll

Leave Me Sad/Chattanooga Mama—SALES: 4084.

Victor 23,568 (same) JOHNNIE POWELL—By The Old Garden Gate/Stapleton Brothers—The Rafe King Murder Case—SALES: 1474.

Victor 23,569\* (released: August 14, 1931) CARTER FAMILY—Can't Feel At Home/When I'm Gone—SALES: 9566.

Victor 23,570 (same) JACK CAWLEY'S OKLAHOMA RIDGE RUNNERS—My Gal Sal/The Vine Covered Cottage—SALES: 1060.

Victor 23,571 (same) THE THREE 'BACCER TAGS (Stapleton Brothers)—Get Your Head In Here/Ain't Gonna Do It No More—SALES: 1375.

Victor 23,572 (same) FRANK STAMPS' ALL STAR QUARTET—Endless Joy Is Coming/A Song Of Jesus' Love Brings Heaven Down—SALES: 1058.

Victor 23,573 (same) JIMMIE DAVIS—There's Evil In Ye, Children, Gather 'Round/Pea Pickin' Papa—SALES: 2553.

Victor 23,574\* (released: October 23, 1931) JIMMIE RODGERS—Moonlight And Skies/Jimmie Rodgers Visits The Carter Family (w/t Carter Family)—SALES: 24,093.

Victor 23,575 (released: August 28, 1931) FLEMING AND TOWNSEND—Pretty Mama, You're Doin' Wrong/Sweet Daddy From Tennessee—SALES: 2467.

Victor 23,576 (same) KID SMITH AND FAMILY—Whisper Softly, Mother's Dying/Little Bessie—SALES: 1016.

Victor 23,577 (same) DAVE AND HOWARD—My Bones Gonna Rise Again/Serves 'Em Fine (Cotton Mill Colic No. 3)—SALES: 936.

Victor 23,578 (same) ALLEN BROTHERS—Pile Drivin' Papa/Monkey Blues—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,579 (same) WILLIAM AND EPHRAIM WOODIE—Likes Likker Better Than Me/Chased Old Satan Through The Door—SALES: 864.

Victor 23,580\* (released: September 11, 1931) JIMMIE RODGERS—Looking For A New Mama/Blue Yodel No. 9—SALES: 25,071.

Victor 23,581 (same) MASTERS' HAWAIIANS—Memory Waltz/Hawaiian Star Dust—SALES: 2894.

Victor 23,582 (same) CLAUDE AND LAWRENCE NICHOLS—She's Killing Me/PINE MOUNTAIN BOYS (Dock Walsh-Garley Foster)—She Wouldn't Be Still—SALES: 1080.

Victor 23,583 (same) BLANKENSHIP FAMILY—Jack And Mae/Working On The Railroad—SALES: 997.

Victor 23,584 (same) BOB MCGIM-

SEY—Bob's Melody/Whistling Bob—SALES: 996.

Victor 23,585\* (released: September 25, 1931) CARTER FAMILY—Sow 'Em On The Mountain/Fond Affection—SALES: 7261.

Victor 23,586 (same) PIPE MAJOR S. MACKINNON—He Sure Can Play A Hamoniky/His Parents Haven't Seen Him Since (from all evidence, this coupling by Radio Mac, or Harry McClintock, seems to have been issued under the name of a Scots-Canadian piper! Does anyone have a copy for confirmation?)—SALES: 1120.

Victor 23,587 (same) JIMMIE DAVIS—She Left A-Runnin' Like A Sewing Machine/She's A Hum-Dum Dinger From Dingersville No. 2—SALES: 2128.

Victor 23,588 (same) HAWAIIAN PALS—If You'll Be M-I-N-E Mine/It's Awful What Whiskey Will Do—SALES: 1047.

Victor 23,589 (same) GENE AUTRY—High Steppin' Mama/She Wouldn't Do It—SALES: 1537.

Victor 23,590 (released: October 9, 1931) ALLEN BROTHERS—Slide, Daddy, Slide/Roll It Down—SALES: 1978.

Victor 23,591 (same) STAPLETON BROTHERS—Strolling Through Life Together/Won't You Take Me Back Again?—SALES: 843.

Victor 23,592 (same) PINE MOUNTAIN BOYS—Wild Woman Blues/The Gas Run Out—SALES: 1047.

Victor 23,593 (same) BLIND JACK MATHIS—Are You Tired Of Me, Darling?/PEG MORELAND—Cowboy Jack—SALES: 867.

Victor 23,594 (same) FLEMING AND TOWNSEND—I Wanta Be Where You Are/How Can You Be Mean To Me?—SALES: 1900.

Victor 23,595 (October 23, 1931) MISSISSIPPI 'POSSUM HUNTERS—Mississippi Breakdown/'Possum On The Rail—SALES: 1242.

Victor 23,596 (same) NICHOLS BROTHERS—I'm Lonely Since Mother's Gone/Dear Old Tennessee—SALES: 821.

Victor 23,597 (same) VAUGHAN QUARTET—I Am Happy Now/A Beautiful Life—SALES: 1085.

Victor 23,598 (same) JULES ALLEN—Somebody, But You Don't Mean Me/Sweetie Dear—SALES: 851.

Victor 23,599\* (released: November 6, 1931) CARTER FAMILY—Lonesome For You/My Old Cottage Home—SALES: 6937.

Victor 23,600 (same) HONOLULU STROLLERS—Don't Say No/Hula Nights—SALES: 1094.

Victor 23,601 (same) JIMMIE

DAVIS—The Davis Limited/Midnight Blues—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,602 (same) TURKEY MOUNTAIN SINGERS—Does The Pathway Lead Straight?/Keep Marching All The Time—SALES: 679.

Victor 23,603 (same) BILL SIMMONS—Rocky Mountain Blues/My California Home—SALES: 801.

Victor 23,604 (released: November 20, 1931) FLEMING AND TOWNSEND—Wanna Be A Man Like Dad/Come And Drift With Me—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,605 (same) PINE MOUNTAIN BOYS—Roll On, Daddy, Roll On/The Apron String Blues—SALES: 759.

Victor 23,606 (same) UNCLE BUD LANDRESS—The Daddy Song-Part 1/The Daddy Song-Part 2—SALES: 629.

Victor 23,607 (same) ALLEN BROTHERS—Shake It, Ida, Shake It/Mother-In-Law Blues—SALES: 1708.

Victor 23,608 (same) BIRD'S KENTUCKY CORN CRACKERS—The Ship That's Sailing High/Beyond Old Jordan's Stream—SALES: 797.

Victor 23,609 (released: December 4, 1931) JIMMIE RODGERS—What's It/Why Should I Be Lonely?—SALES: 20,506.

Victor 23,610 (same) MASTERS' HAWAIIANS—Military March Medley/Chimes Of Hawaii—SALES: 1584.

Victor 23,611 (same) CAROLINA TAR HEELS—Back To Mexico/Got The Farm Hand Blues—SALES: 886.

Victor 23,612 (same) BOB MCGIMSEY—Southern Melodies-Part 1/Southern Melodies-Part 2—SALES: 565.

Victor 23,613 (same) TAYLOR'S LOUISIANA MELODY MAKERS—Mid The Shamrocks Of Shannon/The Garden's Fairest Flower—SALES: 1071.

Victor 23,614 RADIO MAC—Fifty Years From Now/When It's Time To Shear The Sheep, I'm Coming Back—NOT ISSUED.

Victor 23,615 (same) MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE TRIO—(WMBI Announcers' Trio)—In My Heart There Rings A Melody/Saved! (Chicago Special, 10/26/31)—SALES: 373.

Victor 23,616\* (released: December 18, 1931) DICK ROBERTSON—Twenty-One Years/Mary And Mother—SALES: 11,225.

Victor 23,617 (same) GENE AUTRY—Do Right Daddy Blues No. 2/She's A Low-Down Mama—SALES: 1214.

Victor 23,618\* (same) CARTER FAMILY—Room In Heaven For Me/Let The Church Roll On—SALES: 5088.

Victor 23,619 (same) WHITE MOUNTAIN ORCHESTRA—Maxwell's Old Rye Waltz/Escudilla Waltz—SALES: 742.

Victor 23,620 (same) JIMMIE DAVIS—Market House Blues/Get On Board, Aunt Susan—SALES: 1705.

Victor 23,621\* (released: December 31, 1931) JIMMIE RODGERS—Jimmie Rodgers' Puzzle Record/Let Me Be Your Side Track—SALES: 12,922.

Victor 23,622 (same) LONG BROTHERS (Gene Autry-Jimmy Long)—Mississippi Valley Blues/The Cross-Eyed Gal That Lived Upon The Hill—SALES: 955.

Victor 23,623 (same) ALLEN BROTHERS—Unlucky Man/Laughin' And Cryin'—SALES: 1417.

Victor 23,624 (same) MASTERS' HAWAIIANS—My South Sea Sweetheart/Blue Sparks—SALES: 938.

Victor 23,625 (released: January 15, 1932) FLEMING AND TOWNSEND—I Feel So Blue/My Baby Can't Be Found—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,626 (same) CARTER FAMILY—Weary Prodigal Son/Sunshine In The Shadows—SALES: 4329.

Victor 23,627\* (same) DICK ROBERTSON—Up In The Mountains/That Silver-Haired Daddy Of Mine—SALES: 2355.

Victor 23,628 (same) JIMMIE DAVIS—Wild And Reckless Hobo/Down At The Old Country Church—SALES: 1255.

Victor 23,629 (same) SELMA AND DEWEY HAYES—Your Chestnut Hair Is Dimmed With Snow/Broken Heart—SALES: 597.

Victor 23,630 (same) GENE AUTRY—Rheumatism Blues/I'm Atlanta Bound—SALES: 1244.

Victor 23,631 (released: February 12, 1932) ALLEN BROTHERS—It's Too Bad For You/Moonshine Bill—SALES: 1185.

Victor 23,632 (same) GRINNELL GIGGERS—Cotton Pickers' Drag/Sunset Waltz—SALES: 787.

Victor 23,633\* (same) BOB DIXON (Dick Robertson) Sweet Violets/I Forgot To Buy The License—SALES: 1775.

Victor 23,634 (same) JOE STEEN—The Crazy Engineer/I Just Received A Long Letter—SALES: 509.

Victor 23,635 (same) FLEMING AND TOWNSEND—Blowin' The Blues/A Drunkard's Resolution—SALES: 1156.

Victor 23,636\* (February 26, 1932) JIMMIE RODGERS—When The Cactus Is In Bloom/Gambling Polka Dot Blues—SALES: 13,265.



Victor 23,637 (same) LONG BROTHERS—My Old Pal Of Yesterday/Missouri Is Calling—SALES: 753.

Victor 23,638 (same) EARL JOHNSON'S DIXIE ENTERTAINERS—He's A Beaut/I Lost My Girl—SALES: 541.

Victor 23,639 (same) MASTERS' HAWAIIANS—Lion Rag/Lonesome Without My Baby—SALES: 749.

Victor 23,640 (same) GEORGIA WILD CATS (Tom Darby-Jesse Pitts)—Goin' Down That Lonesome Frisco Line/She's Waiting For Me—SALES: 523.

Victor 23,641\* (March 11, 1932) CARTER FAMILY—The Dying Soldier/Motherless Children—SALES: 4102.

Victor 23,642 (same) GENE AUTRY—Jail House Blues/Wild Cat Mama—SALES: 993.

Victor 23,643 (same) DICK ROBERTSON—Fifty Years Repentin'/Waiting—SALES: 671.

Victor 23,644 (same) MISSISSIPPI 'POSSUM HUNTERS—The Last Shot Got Him/Rufus Rastus—SALES: 655.

Victor 23,645 (same) DICK ROBERTSON—An Old-Fashioned Home In New Hampshire/Some-where In The West—SALES: 646.

Victor 23,646 (March 26, 1932) BILL ELLIOTT-BOB MITCHELL—When It's Springtime In The Blue Ridge Mountains/Hills Of Idaho—SALES: 985.

Victor 23,647\* (same) DICK ROBERTSON—The New Twenty-One Years/My Carolina Home—SALES: 1950.

Victor 23,648\* (same) JIMMIE DAVIS—Lonely Hobo/My Arkansas Sweetheart—SALES: 1356.

Victor 23,649 (same) JIM BAIRD (Bill Elliott)—Good Old Times (Are Coming Back Again)/The Funny Old World Rolls Along—SALES: 541.

Victor 23,650 (same) ALFRED AND ORVILLE REED—You'll Miss Me/The Old-Fashioned Cottage—SALES: 541.

Victor 23,651\* (Released: April 8, 1932) JIMMIE RODGERS—Roll Along, Kentucky Moon/For The Sake Of Days Gone By—SALES: 12,448.

Victor 23,652 (same) BILL ELLIOTT—When The Oriole Sings Again/Pals Of The Little Red School—SALES: 793.

Victor 23,653\* (same) FORT WORTH DOUGHBOYS—Sunbonnet Sue/Nancy Jane—SALES: 1246.

Victor 23,654\* (same) GRAHAM BROTHERS—Ninety-Nine Years—Parts 1 And 2—SALES: 2521.

Victor 23,655 (same) CHARLES KAMA—M.T. SALAZAR—Dreamy Moana Nights/My Kalua Hula Girl—SALES: 865.

Victor 23,656\* (Released: April 22, 1932) CARTER FAMILY—I Never Loved But One/Tell Me That You Love Me—SALES: 3360.

Victor 23,657 (same) GRAHAM BROTHERS—I Hear The Voice Of An Angel/Say A Prayer For Mother's Baby (WITHDRAWN).

Victor 23,658 (same) JIM BAIRD—Lonesome Valley/Eleven More Months And Ten More Days—Part 1—SALES: 679.

Victor 23,659 (same) JIMMIE DAVIS—Barnyard Stomp/Red Nightgown Blues—SALES: 1196.

Victor 23,660 (same) PIEDMONT MELODY BOYS (Frank Stamps All Star Quartet)—Troubles Will All End/Tell Him Now—SALES: 393.

Victor 23,661 (same) ASHLEY'S MELODY MEN—Methodist Pie/I Never Felt So Blue—SALES: 456.

Victor 23,662\* (May 6, 1932) ALLEN BROTHERS—I'll Be Here A Long, Long Time/It Can't Be Done—SALES: 1123.

Victor 23,663 (same) ABERNATHY QUARTET—Don't Forget To Pray/Redeemed—SALES: 994.

Victor 23,664 (same) GRAHAM BROTHERS—Gene, The Fighting Marine/Bobby Boy—Part 1—SALES: 432.

Victor 23,665 (same) JIMMIE TARLTON-TOM DARBY—Dixie Mail/Sweetheart Of My Dreams—SALES: 505.

Victor 23,666\* (same) FLEMING AND TOWNSEND—She's Just That Kind No. 2/First Time In Jail—SALES: 1476.

Victor 23,667 (same) GRAHAM BROTHERS—Under The Old Umbrella/It Ain't No Fault Of Mine—SALES: 366.

Victor 23,668 (May 29, 1932) GRAHAM BROTHERS—Spring's Tornado/Embers—SALES: 541.

Victor 23,669\* (same) JIMMIE RODGERS—Ninety-Nine Year Blues/My Time Ain't Long—SALES: 9578.

Victor 23,670 (same) BILL ELLIOTT—Eleven More Months And Ten More Days—Part 2/GRAHAM BROTHERS—Don't Hang Me In The Morning—SALES: 488.

Victor 23,671 (same) CAROLINA TAR HEELS—Why Should I Care?/Nobody Cares If I'm Blue—SALES: 587.

Victor 23,672\* (June 3, 1932) CARTER FAMILY—Where We'll Never Grow Old/We Will March Through The Streets Of The City—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,673 (same) LONG BROTHERS—I'm Always Dreaming Of You/Come Back To Me—SALES: 554.

Victor 23,674 (same) JIMMIE DAVIS—I'll Get Mine Bye And Bye/Davis's Salty Dog—SALES: 843.

Victor 23,675 (same) GRINNELL GIGGERS—Plow Boy Hop/Uncle Ned's Waltz—SALES: 512.

Victor 23,676 (same) FLEMING AND TOWNSEND—Yes, I Got Mine/Oh That Cow—UNISSUED.

Victor 23,677\* (June 17, 1932) BOB DICKSON—Let Me Call You Sweetheart/(If I Ever Meet The) Girl Of My Dreams—SALES: 687.

Victor 23,678\* (same) ALLEN BROTHERS—Inspiration/Maybe Next Week Some Time—No. 2—SALES: 1112.

Victor 23,679 (same) BOB DICKSON—Behind The Big White House/I Found A Peanut—SALES: 377.

Victor 23,680 (same) JIMMIE TARLTON-TOM DARBY—Thirteen Years In Kilbie Prison/Once I Had A Fortune—SALES: 538.

Victor 23,681\* (July 1, 1932) JIMMIE RODGERS—She Was Happy Till She Met You/Home Call—SALES: 6597.

Victor 23,682\* (same) CAROLINA TAR HEELS—She Shook It On The Corner/Times Ain't Like They Used To Be—SALES: 690.

Victor 23,683 (same) GEORGIA YELLOW HAMMERS—Peaches Down In Georgia/White Lightning—SALES: 417.

Victor 23,684 (same) DICK ROBERTSON—Medley Of Familiar Tunes—Parts 1 & 2—SALES: 731.

Victor 23,685\* (same) STUART HAMBLIN—My Mary/My Brown-Eyed Texas Rose—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,686\* (July 15, 1932) CARTER FAMILY—Mid The Green Hills Of Virginia/The Picture On The Wall—SALES: 2950.

Victor 23,687 (same) PARADISE ISLANDERS—Then Someone's In Love/The Voice In The Old Village Choir—SALES: 475.

Victor 23,688 (same) JIMMIE DAVIS—1982 Blues/Saturday Night Stroll—SALES: 690.

Victor 23,689 (same) KELLY HARELL—Cave Love Has Gained The Day/The Henpecked Man—SALES: 279.

Victor 23,690 (same) GRAHAM BROTHERS—Bobby Boy—Part 2/MAC (Harry McClintock)—My Last Dollar—SALES: 314.

Victor 23,691 (July 29, 1932) JOHNNY MARVIN—When You Hear Me Call/I'm Gonna Yodel My Way To Heaven—SALES: 522.

Victor 23,692 (same) ALLEN

BROTHERS—Cross Firing Blues/Window Shade Blues—UNISSUED.

Victor 23,693\* (same) BOB MILLER—Little Red Caboose Behind The Train/Twenty-One Years No. 2—SALES: 1040.

Victor 23,694 FLEMING AND TOWNSEND—Bad Reputation/Unlucky Me—SALES: 759.

Victor 23,695 PARADISE ISLANDERS—Beautiful Ohio/Missouri Waltz—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,696\* (August 12, 1932) JIMMIE RODGERS—Blue Yodel No. 10/Mississippi Moon—SALES: 7746.

Victor 23,697 (same) BOB FERGUSON (Bob Miller)—Things That Might Have Been/The Mule Song—SALES: 292.

Victor 23,698 (same) GUNBOAT BILLY AND THE SPARROW (Arthur Fields-Fred Hall)—I Don't Want To Get Married/I'm Glad I'm A Bum—SALES: 413.

Victor 23,699 (same) STEVE AND HIS HOT SHOTS—The Grape-Vine Twist/Sour Apple Cider—SALES: 344.

Victor 23,700 (same) JIMMIE TARLTON-TOM DARBY—The Weaver's Blues/Ooze Up To Me—SALES: 380.

Victor 23,701\* (August 26, 1932) CARTER FAMILY—The Happiest Days Of All/Amber Tresses—SALES: 2392.

Victor 23,702 (same) FRANK STAMPS AND HIS ALL-STAR QUARTET—There Is Springtime In My Soul/Skies Will Be Blue—SALES: 362.

Victor 23,703\* (same) JIMMIE DAVIS—Sewing Machine Blues/High Behind Blues—SALES: 507.

Victor 23,704 (same) BOB FERGUSON—Song Of The Brown Family/MAC—Sweet Betsy From Pike—SALES: 283.

Victor 23,705 (same) JIMMY LONG—Yodel Your Troubles Away/Doggone Blues—SALES: 341.

Victor 23,706 (September 9, 1932) BUD BILLINGS—Grandmother's Bible/Nobody To Love—SALES: 363.

Victor 23,707 (same) ALLEN BROTHERS—Glorious Night Blues/GENEAUTRY—Black Bottom Blues—SALES: (??).

Victor 23,708 (same) JOHNNY MARVIN—The Man With The Big Black Mustache/Seven Come Eleven—SALES: 394.

Victor 23,709 (same) BUD BILLINGS—When The White Azaleas Start Blooming/Reformatory Blues—SALES: 371.

Victor 23,710\* (same) FLEMING AND TOWNSEND—Cottonfield Blues/That Lonesome Train—SALES: 987.

Victor 23,711\* (September 23, 1932) JIMMIE RODGERS—Hobo's Meditation/Down The Old Road To Home—SALES: 6078.

Victor 23,712 (same) BOB MILLER—The Big-Mouthed Elephant And The Long-Eared Mule/The Happy Warrior—SALES: 374.

Victor 23,713 (same) RAY BROTHERS—Home Town Waltz/Winona Echoes—UNISSUED.

Victor 23,714 (same) GUNBOAT BILLY AND THE SPARROW—Four Stone Walls And A Ceiling/That Goes On For Days And Days—SALES: 300.

Victor 23,715 (same) BUD BILLINGS—Hang On, Brother/BOB FERGUSON—Keep On Keeping On—SALES: 354.

Victor 23,716\* (October 7, 1932) CARTER FAMILY—Carter's Blues/Lonesome Pine Special—SALES: 2478.

Victor 23,717 (same) PARADISE ISLANDERS—Kufi Lei/Na Alii—SALES: 338.

Victor 23,718 (same) JIMMIE DAVIS—The Cowboy's Home Sweet Home/BOB HILL (Bob Miller)—He Was A Good Man—SALES: 421.

Victor 23,719 (same) BOB MILLER—The Rich Man And The Poor Man/I Can't Go To The Poorhouse—SALES: 243.

Victor 23,720 (same) GENE AUTRY—The Gangster's Warning/BUD BILLINGS—I Wonder If He's Singing To The Angels Tonight—SALES: 349.

Victor 23,721\* (October 21, 1932) JIMMIE RODGERS—Mother, The Queen Of My Heart/Rock All Our Babies To Sleep—SALES: 6241.

Victor 23,722 (same) THE HAPPY HAYSEEDS—The Tail Of Halley's Comet/Ladies' Quadrille—SALES: 260.

Victor 23,723 (same) BILL PALMER (Bob Miller)—In The Hills Of Arkansas/The Poor Forgotten Man—SALES: 231.

Victor 23,724 (same) JIMMIE (sic) LONG—Lonely And Blue, Pining For You/Down And Out Blues—SALES: 282.

Victor 23,725 (same) GENE AUTRY—The Gangster's Warning/BUD BILLINGS—I Wonder If He's Singing To The Angels Tonight—SALES: 382.

Victor 23,726 (November 4, 1932) GENE AUTRY—Back To The Old Smoky Mountains/Back Home In The Blue Ridge Mountains—SALES: 294.

Victor 23,727 (same) BURNETT BROTHERS (Bob Miller-Barney Burnett)—Old Shoes A-Druggin'/Singing An Old Hymn—SALES: 212.

Victor 23,728 (same) JOHNNY MARVIN—Jack And Jill/Go Along

Bum And Keep On Bumping Along—SALES: 283.

Victor 23,729 (same) FRANK STAMPS AND HIS ALL-STAR QUARTET—Wonderful Love Divine/I Ain't A-Gonna Let Satan Turn Me 'Roun'—SALES: 285.

Victor 23,730 (same) BURNETT BROTHERS—Countin' Cross Ties/Baby, Please Come Back—SALES: 248.

Victor 23,731\* (November 18, 1932) CARTER FAMILY—Wabash Cannonball/Meet Me By The Moonlight Alone—SALES: 1728.

Victor 23,732 (same) FRANK LUTHER—A Little Street Where Old Friends Meet/The Circle Has Been Broken—SALES: 556.

Victor 23,733 (same) BOB MILLER-BARNEY BURNETT—From Cradle Bars To Prison Bars/Prisoner No. 999—SALES: 274.

Victor 23,734 (same) CHARLES KAMA-M.T. SALAZAR—My Dream Girl Of Honolulu/Goodbye, Hawaii—SALES: 352.

Victor 23,735 (same) FRANK LUTHER—When The Leaves Turn Red And Fall/In The Blue Hills Of Virginia—SALES: 460.

Victor 23,736\* (December 2, 1932) JIMMIE RODGERS—In The Hills Of Tennessee/Miss The Mississippi And You—SALES: 3791.

Victor 23,737 (same) FRANK LUTHER—You're The World's Sweetest Girl/LUTHER-STOKES TRIO—Sweetheart Of All My Dreams—SALES: 253.

Victor 23,738 (same) VAUGHAN QUARTET—My Heavenly Homecoming/It Will Make Heaven Brighter—SALES: 316.

Victor 23,739\* (same) GEORGE'S HOT SHOTS (Don Hall Trio)—We Do It Just The Same/Why Should I?—SALES: 1039.

Victor 23,740 (December 16, 1932) BUD BILLINGS TRIO—My Ivy-Covered Cabin Home/Just Around The Bend—SALES: 302.

Victor 23,741 (same) LUTHER-STOKES TRIO—Going Back To The One I Love/I Wouldn't Trade The Silver In My Mother's Hair—SALES: 349.

Victor 23,742 (same) BOB MILLER—Duck Foot Sue/Hurry, Johnny, Hurry—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,743 (same) GRANT TRIO (Graham Brothers)—I Hear The Voice Of An Angel/BURNETT BROTHERS—When The Mellow Moon Is Shining—SALES: 186.

Victor 23,744 (same) BUD BILLINGS TRIO—Silver-Haired Mother/I'll Meet You In Loveland—SALES: 313.



Victor 23,745 (same) BURNETT BROTHERS—Rockin' Alone/Seven Years With The Wrong Woman—SALES: 255.

Victor 23,746 (December 30, 1932) JIMMIE DAVIS—You Can't Tell About The Women Nowadays/The Shotgun Wedding—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,747\* (same) BOB MILLER—What Does The Deep Sea Say?/KELLY HARRELL—I Heard Somebody Call My Name—SALES: 161.

Victor 23,748\* (same) CARTER FAMILY—Will The Roses Bloom In Heaven?/The Spirit Of Love Watches Over Me—SALES: 1556.

Victor 23,749 (same) JIMMIE DAVIS—Bury Me In Old Kentucky/Home In Caroline—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,750\* (same) PARADISE ISLANDERS—Flowers Of Hawaii (Na Pua O Hawaii)/The Melody Of My Heart—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,751\* (January 13, 1933) JIMMIE RODGERS—Whippin' That Old TB/No Hard Times—SALES: 4258.

Victor 23,752 (same) JIMMIE DAVIS—Hold 'Er Newt/BOB DICKSON—There Ain't No Man In The Moon—SALES: 324.

Victor 23,753 (same) FRANK STAMPS AND HIS ALL-STAR QUARTET—The Great Redeemer/I Want To Hear Him Call My Name—SALES: 216.

Victor 23,754 (same) DICK ROBERTSON—When The Wandering Boy Comes Home/At The Close Of A Long, Long Day—SALES: (no figure given).

Victor 23,755 (same) WHEELER AND LAMB—Will You Sometimes Think Of Me?/I'll Ever Be Faithful To You—SALES: 175.

Further releases through January, 1934, show no sales figures.

Release dates for final items in the Victor 23,000 series are: Victor 23,373-23,377—January 27, 1933; 23,378-23,382—February 24, 1933; 23,383-23,387—March 24, 1933; 23,388-23,392—April 21, 1933; 23,393-23,397—June 30, 1933; 23,398-23,402—July 28, 1933; 23,403-23,407—August 25, 1933; 23,408-23,412—September 27, 1933; 23,413-23,417—October 20, 1933; 23,418-23,422—December (?), 1933; 23,423-23,427—December 12, 1933; 23,428-23,432—January 24, 1934.

Victor 23,756-23,760—January 27, 1933; 23,761-23,765—February 10, 1933; 23,766-23,770—February 24, 1933; 23,771-23,775—March 10, 1933; 23,776-23,780—March 24, 1933; 23,781-23,785—April 7, 1933;

23,786-23,790—April 21, 1933; 23,791-23,795—May 5, 1933; 23,796-23,800—(June 30, 1933); 23,801-23,805—June 2, 1933; 23,806-23,810—June 16, 1933; 23,811-23,815—July 14, 1933; 23,816-23,819—July 28, 1933; 23,820-23,824—August 11, 1933; 23,825-23,829—August 25, 1933; 23,830-23,834—September 8, 1933; 23,835-23,839—September 27, 1933; 23,840-23,844—October 20, 1933; 23,845-23,849—December (?), 1933; 23,850-23,859—December, 1933/January, 1934.

Given the existing social order, it's almost unnecessary to note that the relative sizes of the race and hillbilly catalogs (and the disproportionate sales figures) reflect the disparate degrees of disposable income for these groups. But it should be noted, in fairness, that older "race record" stars like Bessie Smith, Barbecue Bob, Rev. J.M. Gates, and Ida Cox had recorded for other companies active in the race business before

Victor's late entry in 1926-27. Victor had not been able to develop comparably high-profile figures and the only group who seems to have done well for the 23,250-23,432 series was the Washboard Rhythm Kings.

Ralph Peer's celebrated "discovery" of Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family in the summer of 1927 launched these artists into perpetual stardom, and their strong drawing power (especially Rodgers') helped keep the 23,500-23,859 series viable. Each separate release group tends to include a new record by one or the other.

\*Starred items in the list above are records which were still listed in a 1934 Victor Records catalog dating from mid-summer of that year. Sales figures are given for many of these items, which suggests that the totals may have been tallied before all items were withdrawn.

It might be interesting to note in appendix fashion some sales figures from other series. Victor's pop releases in January, 1931 (when the 23,250 and 23,500 series began) looked like this:

Victor 22,586 (January 16, 1931)—DUKE ELLINGTON—28,979; 22,587 (January 23, 1931)—DUKE ELLINGTON—48,191; 22,579 (January 2, 1931)—FRANK CRUMMIT—5904; 22,580 (January 9, 1931)—GUS ARNHEIM—29,066; 22,581 (January 2, 1931)—NAT SHILKRET—18,042; 22,582 (January 2, 1931)—BERT LOWN—17,472; 22,583 (January 9, 1931)—BERT LOWN—38,154; 22,584 (no date)—HOLY CROSS COLLEGE GLEE CLUB—2701; 22,585 (January 16, 1931)—RUDY VALLEE—20,296.



courtesy of STEPHEN CALT

RALPH PEER—The "discoverer" of Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family

Jimmie Rodgers' final release in the 22,000 series also appeared on January 16, 1931 (22,554—Pistol Packin' Papa/Those Gambler's Blues), although it was actually scheduled for release the previous November. No sales figure is available.

Final pop series releases for which sales figures are available come in two groups from January, 1933:

Victor 24,193—LEO REISMAN—22,811; 24,194—RUSS COLUMBO—3331; 24,195—RUSS COLUMBO—2608; 24,196—BABY ROSE MARIE—1262; 24,197—PAUL WHITEMAN—5004—All released January 13, 1933. 24,206—ARDEN OHMAN—2972; 24,207—ISHAM JONES—3821; 24,208—TED WEEMS—2884. All released January 27, 1933.

Final sales figures in the race (V-38,600) and hillbilly (V-40,300) series in the last weeks of 1930 look like this:

Victor V-38,613—THOMAS WALLER—1754; V-38,614—JOHN ESTES—1243; V-38,615—WASHINGTON WHITE—813; V-38,616—KENTUCKY JAZZ BABIES—1875; V-38,617—TEDDY BUNN-SPENCER WILLIAMS—996; V-38,618—WALTER DAVIS—12,491. All released October 10, 1930.

Victor V-38,619—WILLIE KELLY—2195; V-38,620—MEMPHIS JUG BAND—1558; V-38,621—REV. F.W. MCGEE—915; V-38,622—PACE JUBILEE SINGERS—944; V-38,623—DOUGLAS WILLIAMS—2992; V-38,624—EDITH WILSON—1291. All released November 14, 1930.

Victor V-38,625—CHARLIE KYLE—642; V-38,626—MEMPHIS PULLMAN PORTERS CHORUS—679; V-38,627—JELLY ROLL MORTON—(no figure given); V-38,628—JOHN ESTES—867; V-38,629—CANNON'S JUG STOMPERS—833;

V-38,630—CLARENCE WILLIAMS—1271; V-38,631—PACE JUBILEE SINGERS—1108. All released December 12, 1930.

Victor V-40,300—ASHLEY'S MELODY MEN—2021; V-40,301—STAMPS' ALL-STAR QUARTET—2087; V-40,302—JIMMIE DAVIS—6415; V-40,303—ALLEN BROTHERS—20,598; V-40,304—EARL JOHNSON—2075; V-40,308—STEVE'S HOT SHOTS—1867. All released October 3, 1930.

Victor V-40,307—FLOYD COUNTY RAMBLERS—3672; V-40,309—OWEN BROTHERS AND ELLIS—(no figure given); V-40,310—CAROLINA TWINS—2012; V-40,311—STUART HAMBLEN—1826; V-40,312—MCCRAVY BROTHERS—1856. All released October 17, 1930.

Victor V-40,313—RAY BROTHERS—2178; V-40,315—WHIT GAYDON—1446; V-40,317—CARTER FAMILY—24,373; V-40,318—VAUGHAN QUARTET—1901. All released November 7, 1930.

Victor V-40,319—STUART HAMBLEN—3159; V-40,320—STAMPS' QUARTET—(no figure given); V-40,321—FLEMING & TOWNSEND—10,888; V-40,322—BILLINGS-ROBISON—3584; V-40,323—MORRISON BROTHERS—2270; V-40,324—GRAYSON & WHITTER—2281. All released November 21, 1930.

Victor V-40,325—DOCK WALSH—1410; V-40,326—ALLEN BROTHERS—3545; V-40,327—ALFRED G. KARNES—2061. All released December 5, 1930.

Victor V-40,328—CARTER FAMILY—17,990; V-40,333—VAUGHAN QUARTET—1508; V-40,334—ECK ROBERTSON—(no figure given); V-40,335—BILLINGS-ROBISON—3590. All released December 9, 1930.

Victor V-40,329—BILL SIMMONS—2051; V-40,330—CHUCK DARLING—(no figure given); V-40,331—FLOYD COUNTY RAMBLERS—1994;

V-40,332—JIMMIE DAVIS—4094. All released January 2, 1931, along with the first releases in the 23,500 series.

Several additional items show two release dates and are called "Pacific Coast specials." The initial date seems intended for West Coast release, the second for announcement in the regular catalog:

Victor V-40,305—TOM AND CHUCK—3767—September 4, 1930/February 27, 1931; V-40,306—STUART HAMBLEN—1515—August 26, 1930/January 6, 1931; V-40,314—BILLINGS-ROBISON—3856—September 23, 1930/February 13, 1931; V-40,316—THE ROLLING STONES—352—September 30, 1930/December 5, 1930.

Last of all, I suspect that interest in Victor's Acadian French releases from the period warrant a listing. This material derives from a field trip to New Orleans in November 1929.

Victor 22,206—COLUMBUS FRUGE—684; 22,207—LEO SOILEAU AND MOISE ROBIN—748; 22,208—ARTELEUS MISTRIC—1036; 22,209—DELIN T. GUILLORY-LEWIS LAFLEUR—650; 22,210—BIXY GUIDRY-PERCY BABINEAUX (only this release reverses the order of names)—1201; 22,211—BARTMON MONTET-JOSWELL DUPUIS—808; 22,212—JOSEPH P. LANDRY—804. All released February, 1930.

Victor 22,364—SOILEAU COUZENS—445; 22,365—PERCY BABINEAUX-BIXY GUIDRY—604; 22,366—OSCAR DOUCET AND ALIUS SOILEAU—541; 22,367—JOE CREDEUR AND ALBERT BABINEAUX—436. All released June, 1930. 22,562—MONTET-DUPUIS—432; 22,563—BABINEAUX-GUIDRY—305. Both released January, 1931. 22,577—CREDEUR-BABINEAUX—211; 22,578—SOILEAU COUZENS—230. Both released February, 1931.

<sup>1</sup> This title listed on Victor 20,225 in the 1934 catalog.

<sup>2</sup> Sales reported as 48,400 in *The recordings of Jimmie Rodgers* by Johnny Bond (John Edwards Memorial Foundation, 1978) in Norm Cohen's introduction, p. vi.





from the collection of TOM TSOTSI

# GENNETT

## CHAMPION

## BLUES

## Richmond, Indiana

(1923-1934)

—PART 3  
BY  
TOM  
TSOTSI

October 1924 to  
January 1925: Baby  
Bonnie (Ernestine  
Bomburyero) arrives  
from Cincinnati and  
records six sides—

Gennett continued its policy of recording regional artists—reaching to Cincinnati for blues vocalist Ernestine Bomburyero ("Baby Bonnie" on the labels). They recorded her in Richmond with six sides spread over a three-month period from late October 1924 to late January 1925.

The first three sides (October/November) have Lovell Bolan's disciplined piano accompaniment and, on these slow-tempo AAB 12-bar blue Baby Bonnie is an experienced vocalist with a rather good contralto voice.

The Gennett ledgers reveal that the first side (October 24—"Backbiting Moan") was scheduled as a test recording for the Starr Piano Company's Cincinnati store. Apparently, it was deemed worthy of issue after Gennett recorded the titles "I Got Your Water On"/"Leaving School Blues" on November 13, then quickly issued them. The latter side has the familiar, and later, often used, opening lyric.

*"One Monday morning on my way to school (x2)*

*It was that Monday morning I*



from the collection of TOM TSOTSI

RICHMOND, INDIANA—DECEMBER 16, 1924

*broke my mother's rule."*

Baby Bonnie's last three sides, "Black Bottom Blues" on December 16, 1924, and "Longing Blues"/"Home Sweet Home Blues" on January 21, 1925, have augmented accompaniment. Theodore "Wingy" Carpenter provides the intros., the backup obbligato to Bonnie's vocal lines, and a couple of brief solo spots on cornet. These sides also include pianists, Lovell Bolan on the first side and Fats Browne for the last two sides. The Gennett 3041 labels display the names of the two accompanists. The ledgers for the January sides show that for each title recorded, the artist payment was: "Bonnie \$15, Brown (*sic*) \$10, and, Carpenter \$5."

The early female "classical blues" singer was usually accompanied by a small jazz band or piano. In May 1923, for OKeh in New York City, Tom Morris' cornet accompanied Sara Martin and Eva Taylor. In New York that month, Paramount featured Alberta Hunter with Joe Smith, and in Chicago that June, Paramount highlighted Edna Taylor with a cornet identified as possibly Tommy Ladnier. The Baby Bonnie

sides represent Gennett's entry into this genre of cornet/piano blues accompaniments. The recordings are auspicious; Theodore Carpenter, who later was destined to achieve a minor degree of fame with his 1940 Decca recording, "Preachin' Trumpet Blues," proves most competent. His backing and fills to Bonnie's vocal lines are close to Tommy Ladnier's "Talking Tommy" cornet work of this period. Carpenter is heard also in the introductions, then with a spirited double-time eight-bar burst on "Black Bottom Blues," and an expressive 12-bar solo on "Longing Blues."

Len Kunstadt wrote an excellent reference article on Carpenter in *Record Research* No. 44 (July 1962). Carpenter's memory was hazy on his early period, but he did recall traveling with Baby Bonnie's act then. Kunstadt researched copious media files of the period and, in *Billboard's* February 7, 1925 issue, he found this mention: "Carpenter's first Gennett record has 'Tongueing (*sic*) Blues' and 'The Backbiter's Moon (*sic*).' This is illustrative of the casual inaccuracies found in print—the first title is obviously "Longing Blues," and



the second, "Backbiting Moan," on which Carpenter is not present. A Gennett publicity release in *Talking Machine Weekly* (March 25, 1925) refers to the "Longing Blues" side and credits "Fatz Brown" (sic) and Ted Carpenter as the accompanists. Carpenter said his style of playing was reminiscent of Tommy Ladnier; his horn was often confused with Ladnier's, and vice versa. Indeed, these Gennett sides bear out Carpenter on this. Carpenter also claimed he recorded behind many blues singers, one being Ozie McPherson from Philadelphia with Teddy Hill on tenor and J. Benton Overstreet on piano.

Although these two unlikely recording colleagues can be discounted, Carpenter's mention of Ozie McPherson strikes a chord. Ozie McPherson recorded for Paramount in Chicago (late 1925/early 1926), then as "Ozie Ware" in New York City (late 1928/early 1929). In the fall of 1929, she recorded eight sides for Columbia; six were issued as "Liza/Eliza Brown." Columbia 14471, "Peddlin' Man"/"If Papa Has Outside Lovin'," features Ozie on lead vocal with vocal exchange and asides by a deep male voice, possibly Wesley Wilson, the pianist. There is superb, muted trumpet accompaniment throughout. Heretofore, the trumpeter's identity has remained "unknown." Granted, five years had passed since Carpenter's first acoustically recorded accompaniments, but Carpenter's recall, along with a listen to Ozie's Columbia 14471 titles, strongly suggest that he is on trumpet here. One wonders about the possibility of Carpenter's presence on other New York blues sides, now listed as "Tpt. acc.—unknown." An example would be Laura Smith's OKeh 8445. A pity that Carpenter's memory couldn't dislodge other names for possible investigation.

April 6, 1925: Marie Grinter and Hociel Thomas record five titles in Richmond—

George W. Thomas makes his second appearance in Gennett's Richmond studio (his first was with Tiny Franklin in December 1923), this time with two female vocalists in tow—his daughter, Hociel Thomas, and presumably his protégé, Marie Grinter—both recording for the first time. Additionally, George Thomas brings three musicians (clarinet, alto sax, and violin) to provide accompaniment along with his piano backing. This session of Chicago-based artists, with George Thomas as the contractor, was probably arranged by Fred Wiggins, the manager of Starr's Chicago Music Store. Wiggins was later promoted to head Gennett Records' sales and artists division.

On this date, Marie Grinter made two titles previously recorded by George Thomas' sister, Sippie (Thomas) Wallace—"Morning Dove Blues"—composed by George Thomas—and "Leavin' McDaddy Is Hard To Do." Grinter's voice on "Morning Dove Blues" is young-sounding; it has that "little-girl" range. She uses Sippie Wallace's February, 1925 OKeh version as a guide, but she varies the lyrics in the second of three 12-bar verses. Her second side on this date was not issued. In a "Remarks Column" the Gennett ledgers note: "Rejected by Thomas." No specific reason is given for Thomas' rejection.

In July 1928, Grinter will make a second appearance in Richmond, accompanied by three members of the State Street Ramblers (Angelo "Alvin" Fernandez, clarinet, Jimmy Blythe, piano, and Bill Johnson, string bass). Other Ramblers' sides surround the four Grinter sides. On the three issued sides, Grinter's mature voice and greater projection had evolved in the three-year interval.

Hociel Thomas' deep contralto voice contrasts with that of Grinter's, and she performs her three tunes, "I Can't Feel Frisky (Without My Liquor)," "Worried Down With the Blues," and "I Must Have It" with credibility and style. "Worried Down With the Blues" is a Hociel Thomas/George Thomas composition, and Hociel recorded it again two months later on OKeh with her 15-year old uncle (!) Hersal Thomas on piano (Hociel was 21). Interestingly, Mad-

lyn Davis records this title, same tune, same lyrics, on Paramount 12498 in June 1927, but composer credit on the Paramount is to "Madlyn Davis." Composer credit "lifting" was (and is) common in the blues field. In Davis' case, her Paramount-issue composer credits are either to herself or to no one at all.

As to the unknown musicians, a clarinet (along with Thomas' piano) is dominant throughout, an alto sax plays only on the first Grinter side, and a violin remains eerily in the background throughout. Aurally, the clarinet and alto sax sound the same as Thomas' Muscle Shoal Devils' OKeh session in Chicago, June 25, in their instrumental versions of "Morning Dove Blues" and "Wash Woman Blues." At this OKeh session, Hersal Thomas recorded his piano solo, "Hersal Blues," and Hociel Thomas cut her first two OKeh sides with Hersal on piano. On Hociel Thomas' last side on this Gennett session, "I Must Have It," she inserts the vocal aside, "...Put 'em down to the bricks, Mr. Thomas..." this during the eight-bar clarinet solo. Presumably, she identifies her father, George, not her young uncle, Hersal.

The Thomas Family group, Sippie Wallace, Hociel Thomas, and Hersal Thomas, was active from February 1925 to May 1927, recording for OKeh in Chicago. Curiously, among the 32 sides cut during this period (adding one by Lillian Miller with Hersal on piano), George W. Thomas, the family patriarch, does not appear to have been a participant. At this time, his recording activity is limited to the above Gennett session and two unissued sides as piano accompanist to Ethyl Bynum for Columbia in July 1926. One wonders if there is a background story here, or whether George simply confined himself to contracting OKeh sessions.

Hociel Thomas may have terminated her career abruptly because of Hersal's untimely death from food poisoning (at age 16) in 1926. Apparently, she moved to the West Coast—(this from Paul Oliver's *Blues Off The Record/Liner Notes to Magpie Lp 4404*). However, Sheldon Harris' *Blues Who's Who* has Hociel



from the collection of SHERMAN TOLST

AUGUST, 1946—SAN FRANCISCO

working local theater dates in Chicago in the early 1930s, and moving to California around 1942. In August 1946, Rudi Blesh found Hociel Thomas and recorded her for his Circle label in San Francisco. A 20-year recording hiatus notwithstanding, Hociel sings better on Circle J-1014 than she did in the 1920s. She also accompanies herself on piano in "Go Down Sunshine." Here, the veteran jazz man Mutt Carey provides exalted trumpet backing—a nice throw-back to the 1920s Chicago blues era (Sippie Wallace did this tune for Victor in February 1929, but it was not issued). The other side, "Tebo's Texas Boogie," is a good basic blues piano solo by Hociel (Tebo was her married name), and indeed, it's gratifying to hear this previously undiscovered talent of Hociel's. Piano playing appears to have been a Thomas Family tradition.

May 26, 1925:  
Gennett rejects all six  
titles by "Cow Cow"  
Davenport and Dora  
Carr—

piano on his two "Negro Dialect" sides—the ledgers reveal no musical instrument—perhaps these were comedic monologues.

On October 1, 1925, Davenport and Carr were back in New York City's OKeh studio, where they recorded the same four unissued Gennett titles. This time, the sides were issued. By March, 1926, they were in Atlanta, where they made their last two sides as a team for OKeh. It was Ralph Peer's seventh "territorial recording" trip to Atlanta for OKeh.

Woods Blind Jubilee  
Singers—August 18,  
1925

Gennett continued its diverse recording output by dipping its foot into the waters of black sacred music. The ledgers do not show how many singers were in the Woods Blind Jubilee Singers group, nor if there was musical accompaniment. Three matrices were cut—"Glory Hallelah," "This Train Is Bound For Glory/De Little Wheel Rollin' In My Heart," "The Lord's Prayer." The Gennett ledgers note: "Reject except for Personal. Made as tests for catalog, won't do; Try sell (to) Birmingham; Quoted Birmingham 40¢ (per record) in lots of 500—Personal label." This marketing approach indicates the vocal group might have been from the Birmingham area, where local interest could generate sales of personal records.

Gennett makes the  
transition to electrical  
recording—

There is a gap of blues and gospel recording activity in Richmond from the above August, 1925 session to the next entry in June, 1926. During this interim, Gennett initiated their first efforts at the electrical recording process. The ledgers do not indicate the precise date, nor the artist performing the





RICHMOND, INDIANA—FEBRUARY 24, 1926

harmonica solos on matrices 12458/59 (both rejected), but the Remarks Column does show the notation, "Electric," on these matrix numbers through to mx. 12477. The following matrices, 12460 to 12465 are by white country artist Sam Long ("Old Time Fiddle"), with four sides issued on the Gennett red-label series, Nos. 3255 and 3284. The following two matrices, 12466/67 are of extreme interest, since they are by Jelly Roll Morton's Incomparables—and here the ledgers do show the date: February 24, 1926. Morton's group recorded two takes of "Milenburg Joys" (Slow Drag), both rejected, and one take of "Mr. Jelly Lord" (Slow Drag), issued on Gennett 3259 and Champion 15105.

The Gennett ledgers drop the notation, "Electric," at matrix 12478 (about March 15, 1926) through to a session by Art Payne and His Orch. (c. October 1926). The ledgers describe matrices 12582 1/2 & 12583 as "Acoustic" (both rejected), and mx. 12584 as "Electric, #3 Machine" (issued on Challenge 218). This seems to indicate that Gennett was still experimenting with their electrical recording procedures.

It appears that Gennett's complete conversion to the electrical process begins when the matrix numbers have the prefix "GE." This starts at mx. 12600 on February 23, 1927 by Melrose's Dixieland Thumpers—the debut of Gennett field recordings at a Chicago studio location.

Of interest within this February through October 1926 period are the four rejected masters by Speed Webb & His Hoosier Melody Lads on March 30, 1926 (Speed Webb never did get to hear the tests of these sides), the Hopi Indian records made on location with portable equipment in the El Tovar Hotel at Grand Canyon, Arizona in late May/early June, and the continuation of field recordings either at the Arizona hotel location or possibly in Los Angeles in mid-June, when 12 matrices featuring white artists, such as Bill Hennessey & His Packard Six of KFI-Los Angeles, Carl Hoffmayer's California Aces, and Carol Loughner's La Monica Ballroom Orch. were recorded. On August 3, 1926, master tests were sent to the "customer" in Los Angeles, but all sides were rejected.

## June 1926: back to Richmond, Indiana—with the Wesley Female Quartet/Skeets Edwards/Wesley Trio—

Matrices 12550 to 12555 follow the Los Angeles white band recordings made on field location. The venue for these is Richmond and the date is late June, 1926. It appears that this group was from New Orleans. The ledgers note: "New Orleans, Vocal" for two Wesley Female Quartet titles, one of which, "Reign, Massa Jesus, Reign," was issued on Gennett 3354 and Silvertone 3838. The last two matrices are by the Wesley Trio ("Vocal"); one of which, "Everytime I Feel The Spirit," was issued as the "B" side of the above 78s (*Blues & Gospel Records* notes that these sides were subsequently issued on Buddy 8053).

The middle two titles (by Skeets Edwards, "Vocal") were rejected. The Remarks Column has: "Trumpet very weak" for all four takes. The titles are of the blues genre: "Go Back Where You Stayed Last Night" and "Heart-sick Blues," as opposed to the surrounding gospel titles. This is intriguing. Surely, Skeets Edwards was a female member of the Wesley group. Could another female member have played the "very weak trumpet" accompaniment? Access to the first title shows no musical accompaniment—simply a very polite, church-social-type, female vocal quartet. Whether the other issued side by the Wesley Trio is likewise, an unaccompanied vocal, remains to be verified.

**Part 4 will resume our review with Gennett's first blues issue on their new Electrobeam 6000 series.**

## PORTRAIT OF A BLUES SINGER



by  
Stephen  
Calt



This excerpt forms the first part of a book-length biography of the legendary Skip James. Subsequent chapters will appear in future issues of 78. Quarterly

# ONE

In the winter of 1931, a blues singer boarded a segregated Illinois Central passenger train in Jackson, Mississippi. He was a small, dark, figure with a laborer's brawny build and a face that was memorable chiefly for its blue eyes. He carried no luggage, except for a 65-dollar guitar that had recently been given to him by a local record store owner. In his pockets were 13 dollars, expense money the same man had given him.

He had no idea how much he would be paid for the records he was scheduled to make, or how many songs he would be allowed to record. Almost nothing concerning the session had been explained to him by his sponsor, who had given him his train ticket.

The man had been north of Memphis only once, two years before, and he was surprised to see a well-dressed, light-complexioned black woman board the train at Springfield, Illinois with a white man, evidently her lover. He had never seen a mixed couple. In his native Mississippi, a black man could not glance at a white woman without risking the wrath of Southern whites; if a white man consorted with a black woman, he did so surreptitiously.

Noticing his guitar, the man asked him if he could play *Am I Blue?*, a popular tune Ethel Waters

had introduced a year and a half earlier in a movie musical.

"I think so," Skippy James replied. After singing a verse, he completed the song with kazoo accompaniment. Enraptured by his performance, the couple engaged him in conversation. When James explained that he was headed north to record for the Paramount label, the woman asked what songs he intended to record. She wrote down his address, and promised to buy his records.

A few moments after they concluded their conversation, the woman tapped him on the shoulder and handed him 50 cents. Silently, he snickered. Her lover was a wealthy Jew, he thought; he could have afforded a dollar tip.

"...Hailed by a white stranger in a business suit."

At six o'clock the next morning the train pulled into frigid, snow-blanketed Milwaukee. In the station, James was startled to find himself hailed by a white stranger dressed in a business suit. As the man introduced himself as Art Laibly the recording manager of Paramount, James wondered how Laibly had

been able to recognize him. Together they rode an electric train to Grafton, a small town 20 miles north of Milwaukee. Laibly escorted him to a local hotel, where he was to rest before the session began that afternoon. Before leaving James, Laibly asked him how many records he could make "As many as you want," James replied.

Soon James fell asleep. At eleven a bellhop woke him and took him to a café, where Laibly bought his lunch. As James ate, Laibly explained the financial details of the recording session, offering him a choice between a deferred sales royalty and a flat fee for making records over the next two years. Believing that his records would sell abundantly, James decided to accept the deferred payment arrangement.

At one o'clock, he was taken to a nearby recording studio located on the second floor of a deserted factory. The room was empty except for an engineer and a tall, attractive black woman who evidently worked as Laibly's assistant.

A glance at the company's equipment satisfied him that it was "number one stuff."

Laibly asked him if he preferred to begin recording on guitar or piano. James replied laconically

that it made no difference to him. Laibly suggested that he begin his session on a company guitar, which could accommodate 12 strings. As James tuned the instrument he marveled that it could hold a tone "just like a piano." In his mind, it was worth \$350, far more than the five- or 10-dollar instruments he was accustomed to owning.

"Laibly gave him two mint tablets and a glass of whiskey..."

After explaining recording procedures, Laibly gave him two mint tablets and a glass of whiskey, expedients the singer used to "scrape out" his throat. At Laibly's request, he began playing the first song of his session, *Devil Got My Woman*. After he finished a couple of verses he was beckoned to the control booth by an engineer, who asked if he had ever heard his voice on record. The song fragment, which had been recorded to test volume levels, was played back to him for his reaction.

Then the session began. At the onset of a flashing green light James would begin playing a song of his own choosing. He was to continue until he saw a red light, which meant that he was to complete the song after finishing the verse he was singing. When a song was finished, Laibly would ask him for its title. In some instances, he would be asked to repeat a song.

One of James' songs, a dirge-like, minor key lament, appeared to impress Laibly:

*Hard times here an' everywhere you go*

*Times is harder than ever been before.*

*An' the people are driftin' from door to door*

*Can't find no heaven, I don't care where they go.*

Laibly expressed surprise that James had observed the effects of the Depression.

By the late afternoon James had recorded over a dozen tunes, most of them blues. On the following morning, he returned to the stu-



GRAFTON, February, 1931—The Depression and hard times

dio and recorded a succession of piano songs. For these recordings, Laibly placed a board beneath his feet to enhance the sound of his foot-stomping. When Laibly asked if he could compose a song about a gun, James thought for a few minutes and reeled off an impromptu tune concerning a non-existent caliber:

*If I send for my baby, and she don't come*

*All the doctors in Wisconsin, they won't help her none.*

*And if she gets unruly, and gets so she won't 'do'*

*I'll take my twenty-two twenty, I'll cut her half in two.*

As he repeated the second verse, he pummeled the board beneath him with his shoe, as if to demonstrate the violence he intended to wreak upon the imaginary girlfriend.

After he had completed four songs, Laibly informed him that he

had recorded more tunes than any previous Paramount artist.

He spoke of holding another session later that year.

"James left...with eight dollars in expense money."

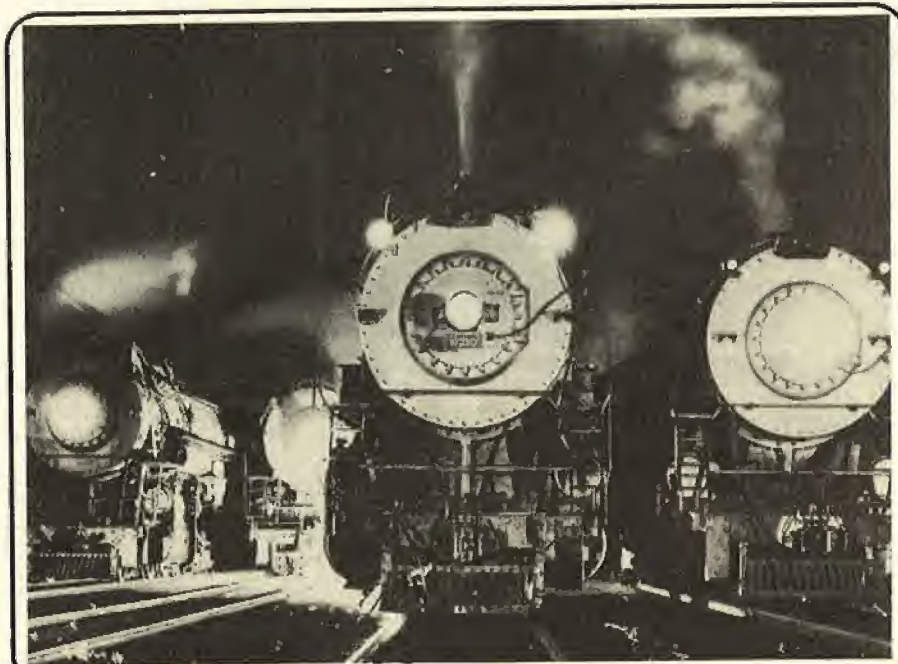
James left Grafton that afternoon with eight dollars in expense money given by Laibly, and a promise of receiving payment by mail when his records were issued.

He anticipated attaining immense fame from his records. In the meantime, however, he would resume the footloose lifestyle one of his songs had commemorated:

*You wake up, set out on a long ol' lonesome road*

*"I got to leave from here, catch the first freight train that blow."*

*(Hard Luck Child)*



WINTER, 1931: The train pulled into snow-blanketed Milwaukee at six AM.





Celebrating the footloose lifestyle (Grafton, Feb. 1931)

"I never was in anything too long or deep: that's why I reckon they called me 'Skip,'" he once remarked.

His immediate plans involved nothing more exalted than an appearance at a weekend house party in Jackson. As the weekend was a few days away, he decided to get off when his train stopped in Memphis. He made his way to a barrelhouse on North Nichols street, in the city's black red-light district. As always, he counted on ready money by introducing himself to the owner as a musician and playing an audition tune.

In the middle of his performance a brawl erupted. At the sound of gunfire, he stopped playing, and walked out in disgust.

## TWO

Jazz collectors who first encountered the records of Skip James in the mid-1940s regarded him

as a primitive jazz pianist. It was not until the mid-1950s that James' works became recognized as blues classics by a small circle of collectors who began to specialize in such music, which had been retailed in the South for black consumers and had received no contemporary publicity.

His records, issued in minute quantities by a company that was on the verge of going out of business, became the most coveted rarities in the blues field. Six or seven of them had turned up in the 30 years that followed his session. Beyond the fact that all of James' records had been produced at one extended session, specialists knew nothing of the circumstances that surrounded them. Because the defunct company that had recorded him had discarded its recording ledgers during the Depression, it was not known how many songs Skip James had actually recorded, or how many of his records the company had actually issued. Only a few copies of each surviving Skip James record existed; two of them existed in the form of a single scratchy copy.

Their rarity and obscurity added to their appeal: a collector who owned a Skip James record could bask in a feeling of exclusivity. His records were all the more treasured by early collectors because his sound was completely esoteric. Like the blues of other southern guitarists of the era, they had no seeming connection with either popular music or the band blues of celebrated singers like Bessie Smith. Most collectors regarded popular music with contempt: to them, it was bland and formula-ridden. The blues of a musician like Skip James, on the other hand, projected solitary passion. Its meanings could only be surmised by modern-day listeners. There were no studies of such music; it had arisen, existed, and died unrecognized.

Presumed  
"deranged—so  
unworldly was his  
music."

Except as a name on a record label, Skip James had no identity. Within the mystery that was Southern blues, he was an enigma: an apparent rustic who played with curious polish. Collectors were puzzled by his proficiency on two instruments: all other recorded blues artists either played one instrument, or dabbled amateurishly on a second one. His voice, too, was a curiosity: sometimes he sang in an understated tenor, and sometimes in a lush falsetto. His guitar-playing had a luminous, eerie sound. As they listened to his records, collectors often wondered what kind of person he had been. One collector supposed that he had been deranged, so unworldly was his music.

Such fantasies were easily aroused among early blues collectors, because none of them had set sight on an actual representative of the early blues era. As human beings, blues singers were ciphers. The culture that produced them was similarly opaque. The records were like artifacts of a lost, uncharted civilization.

In the absence of tangible knowledge about their favorite musicians, collectors coined a catch-all label for self-accompanied blues guitarists like Skip James. The music was called "country blues," and the musicians, "country bluesmen." In the minds of collectors, these phrases became musical superlatives. They signified that the musician forged his own songs, without the assistance of songwriters, and devised his own accompaniments. The essence of country blues, collectors thought, was a staunch musical individualism.

Having invented a genre, collectors sought to introduce it to the public by reissuing their most prized 78 rarities in album form. Between 1959 (when the term "country blues" took hold among collectors) and 1962, specialist anthologies called "The Country Blues," "Really The Country Blues," and "The Mississippi Blues" introduced a new-found but defunct genre that in reality simply showcased forgotten blues by obscure Southern blues artists.

One of those who embraced the small but rabid cult of "country blues" was a recent high school graduate from Meridian, Mississippi,

Gayle Wardlow. Wardlow had originally been a country and western enthusiast. Partly because old blues records were readily found in his home state, he became interested in collecting them. By the time Wardlow immersed himself in blues, however, the music was seemingly extinct. His only memory of a living blues guitarist stemmed from his childhood, when he had seen one perform at a depot in Louisiana. Sometimes he wondered if this figure had been one of the men who made the records he collected.

Wardlow "could  
expect to be—arrested  
by the police."

Periodically, Wardlow "canvassed" for blues 78s in tumble-down shacks occupied by elderly blacks. The blacks who still owned records from the 1920s no longer listened to blues. Most of the records he unearthed were in poor or unplayable condition. Occasionally, Wardlow would ask older blacks if they remembered certain musicians. For the most part, the blacks were

uncommunicative. Often he could not tell whether they were leery of talking to whites, or simply uninterested in blues. His perfunctory encounters with them were always strained and tense. In Mississippi, segregation was still the order of the day, and a white person was thought to have no legitimate business visiting a black household except as a salesman. Whenever he pulled his car abreast a row of houses in a black neighborhood, Wardlow was afraid that some local redneck would notice him and peg him for a civil rights worker out to register blacks. In this event, he could expect to be harassed or even arrested by the police.

If interdicted by whites who took a paranoid, proprietary attitude towards the "nigras" in their community, it would be easy enough for Wardlow to account for his presence in a black neighborhood. He was pursuing an innocent hobby, collecting old records. But the thought of having to explain himself in this fashion filled Wardlow with a sick unease. White Southerners were not supposed to like "nigger music". Moreover, his hobby was not a casual pastime; it had become almost an obsession, goaded by the maddening knowledge that somewhere within driving distance of Meridian were musicians who had once made the records he collected.

Like a detective searching for suspects, Wardlow kept a list of likely Mississippi bluesmen: Kid Bailey, William Harris, Skip James. The most coveted suspect was Skip James, whom collectors esteemed as one of the two or three greatest blues artists of all time. Although Wardlow did not own any of his records, he had heard the four James sides that had been reissued on early 1960s anthologies.

James and his counterparts were biographical blanks, and finding information about any of them appeared to be a forbidding task. Jukeboxes had supplanted professional musicians in Mississippi, so the local artists who had once recorded blues had left no protégés. The musicians themselves were either dispersed or dead. A living ex-musician would be all but impossible to locate, except by chance.



SKIP JAMES' FIRST REISSUE ON LP  
OJL-2—Origin Jazz Library's original 1961 cover





DRAFTON, Feb., 1931: "If I Go To Louisiana...They'll Hang Me..."

Few Mississippi blacks had telephones. For the most part they lived in "quarters"—squalid shacks on nameless and often unpaved streets. There were upwards of two hundred Mississippi towns, some too small to appear on contemporary maps, with such "quarters."

For months Wardlow made inquiries concerning James in assorted Mississippi towns. For all of his efforts, he had nothing to add to the stark notation that appeared on the back of an Origin reissue album:

"Skip James..No details. Said to have been from Louisiana. Was proficient on both guitar and piano. Present whereabouts unknown."

The flimsy notion that James had been from Louisiana had arisen from one of his lyrics:

*I'm goin' I'm goin' Comin' here no more*

*If I go to Louisiana Lord, they'll, They'll hang me sure.*

*(If You Haven't Any Hay, Get on Down The Road.)*

Yet Wardlow believed that James and most of the country blues greats of the 1920s hailed from his native state. This supposition had been fostered by northern record collectors, who took it as an article of faith that because blues arose from the oppressed condition of blacks, the repressive state of Mississippi necessarily produced the most intense blues singers. Their reasoning was supported by the fact that some blues greats were actually from Mississippi: Bukka White, Charlie Patton, and Robert Johnson.

Although Charlie Patton and Robert Johnson had been dead for three decades, it appeared that some Mississippi blues singers who had recorded in the 1920s might still be alive, and able to resurrect their old music. In November of 1962, Wardlow was startled to learn that a northern blues enthusiast had rediscovered a 1920s guitarist named Mississippi John Hurt in a tiny Delta town. The discovery had not entailed any clever detective work or even persistence. In 1928 Hurt had

recorded a tune called Avalon Blues that began:

*Avalon's my home town, always on my mind*

The enthusiast had merely looked up Avalon on a Mississippi map, and driven there from Washington, D. C. It turned out that Hurt had spent all of his 70 years in Avalon, working at assorted manual jobs. He had never been a professional musician and did not consider himself a blues singer. Because his brother was a local bootlegger, he first took the white visitor for a revenue man.

Hurt had since moved to Washington and launched a career in coffeehouses. Despite his advanced age, he was able to play all of his old songs exactly as he had recorded them 35 years before. He was an easy-going, self-effacing figure who found a ready niche in what was called the "folk revival". He had even appeared on The Johnny Carson Show.

Ishmon Bracey—"a spiritless, inarticulate man..."

It grated on Wardlow that a Northerner had accomplished Hurt's rediscovery, and that blues specialists were primarily Yankees and Europeans. On a tip from an acquaintance, he soon managed to turned up one recorded blues singer from the 1920s, Jackson's Ishmon Bracey. But Bracey had become a minister and was not interested in performing secular music. He was a spiritless, inarticulate man whose reminiscences invariably ran to the subject of how popular and prosperous he had been as a blues singer.

Nevertheless, Wardlow ran through his list of Mississippi blues suspects with Bracey, who had traveled widely throughout the state. Mention of Skip James brought only Bracey's skeletal recollection of a musician he had once seen in Jackson decades before. He played in a strange style, and his fingers were a blur on the guitar, Bracey said. Apparently Bracey had taken no real interest in the man or his music; otherwise he begrudged mention of

a one-time competitor.

A few months after finding Bracey, in the middle of 1963, Wardlow learned that a Chicago blues singer named Johnnie Temple had returned to his native Jackson to visit relatives. Temple had been a successful band singer in the 1930s, recording nearly a hundred blues for the Decca label. Collectors regarded his works as boring and gave them a wide berth; they seemed to represent the antithesis of the music of a Skip James or John Hurt.

To Wardlow, the 55-year old Temple was a figure of interest only for his recollections of Mississippi blues singers who had preceded him. After making perfunctory conversa-

tion with him, Wardlow asked Temple if he had ever heard of Skip James. "Yeah, I knew Skippy," Temple said. "I learned guitar from him." James, he said, came from Bentonia, Mississippi.

Wardlow had never heard of Bentonia, a small plantation town in the hills halfway between Jackson and Yazoo City. On his first free weekend after talking to Temple, he drove there from Meridian in the hopes of finding Skip James. The town consisted primarily of a general store and a gas station. It looked indistinguishable from other pokey Mississippi towns that had existed to fuel the moribund cotton economy. In 1930 it had numbered only 170 persons.



courtesy GAYLE DEAN WARDLOW

ISHMON BRACEY—late 1920s  
He "begrudged mention of a one-time competitor."

One of them had been Skip James. Within minutes of arriving at Bentonia, Wardlow had picked up various scraps of information concerning James: that he was a small man whose real name was "Nemia", that he had learned guitar from an older localite named Henry Stuckey, that his song *Cypress Grove* had been named for a Bentonia lake in which James had swum and fished as a boy, that he had once had a nervous breakdown because a wife (the subject of *Devil Got My Woman*, it was said) had left him for a rival, that he had gone to Texas after his recording session, and had returned to Bentonia in the late 1940s.

"You should kill that S.O.B."

But no one had seen James for nearly ten years. A cousin named Lincoln Polk told Wardlow that he had staked a cotton crop for James around 1955 by borrowing 500 dollars from a Yazoo City bank. Together they had raised a crop. One morning during the fall harvest season he awoke to find that James and a wife had disappeared. In the center of town was his own abandoned truck. Before his departure, James had cashed in the cotton crop it carried. When Polk reported his loss to his white boss, the man told him: "You should kill that S.O.B." Ostensibly to recover his money, Polk had visited Tunica in search of James, who had supposedly gone there, but had been unable to find him.

One local source said that James had gone to Birmingham to collect an inheritance. Wardlow wondered if he might have gone to West Memphis, Arkansas, where Johnnie Temple had last seen him around 1960 or 1961. On that occasion, Temple said, James spoke of operating a night club.

After a cousin in Yazoo City whose name he had obtained from Polk told him that James was living in Tunica County, Wardlow decided to look for James there. On a street in Tunica, a town in the northern part of the Delta, a man named M. C. Patton who professed to be Charlie Patton's nephew accosted him for



beer money. He claimed to have seen James three years previously in nearby Hollywood, adding that James had left for the North to record. This story seemed unlikely. Then Wardlow met a gambler named "Hard-Face," who appeared to have known Skip James. "Hard-Face" described a small, elderly man of James' general appearance who played blues on piano and guitar. The man, whom "Hard-Face" knew only as "Curly," had operated a night-spot in West Memphis around 1961. He had been arrested on a bootlegging warrant and had jumped bail. "Hard-Face" recalled that "Curly" had told him that he was going to Alabama.

Finding James, it now appeared, would be a difficult task. He was a man who did not want to be found.

## THREE

Later, he would make up a morbid, sorrowful song about the experience. It began:

*Layin' sick on my bed*

*I used to have a few friends but they wish that I was dead.*

*The doctor came in lookin' very sad*

*He diagnosed my case and he said it was awfully bad.*

*He walked away, mumblin' very low*

*Say: "He may get better but he'll never get well no more."*

His desolation was not simply a song conceit: he had only one visitor, a common-law wife who found him incomprehensible. "He gets up at night and sits and thinks," she would say of him. "He won't tell anybody what's on his mind."

James fulfills a fortune teller's strange prophecy?

As he lay in the hospital ward, he brooded. Decades ago, when he was a child, his condition had been prophesized. His mother

had taken him to a fortune teller: the fortune teller had told him that he would travel widely in life and become a famous person, but would be ruined by a scandal. Her melodramatic words had made a lasting impression on him. Once he had traveled widely and had achieved some fame with music. Now the last part of the prophecy had come true.

The doctors hadn't explained what was wrong with him, and he would not have trusted their explanations. He had no confidence in their ability to heal him. The task of healing him was up to Jesus. If Jesus wanted him to recover, he would recover. If Jesus wanted him to die, he would die.

But he was not resigned to death. He wanted to get off the hospital bed and destroy the person who was responsible for his condition—a wrenching growth on his penis.

The malefactor, he knew, was a girlfriend who had worked hoodoo on him. She had done it to ruin his sex life after he had refused to leave his wife for her. In the process she had inflicted shame and disgrace upon him: he had looked forward to equalling his father, who had boasted of leading a vigorous sex life up to the age of 86.

She would not go unpunished for subjecting him to what he called "this jinks of death." If he ever got out of the hospital, he would shoot the woman dead. Even if he saw her on a public street in broad daylight, he would open fire, and keep firing until he ran out of ammunition. Afterwards, the Tunica police could do with him what they wished.

## FOUR

Late one night in the latter part of 1931, a short, bull-necked pastor found himself at a deserted railroad depot on an unmarked country road in central Mississippi. He was in route from Dallas to Birmingham with his wife, a school teacher from Tuscaloosa. An anticipated turn-off to Jackson was nowhere in

sight.

The 51-year old Eddie James stepped out of his Buick and beamed a flashlight across the depot sign, which read "Bentonina."

Some 25 years earlier, he had left Bentonina as a wanted man. At that time, James had been a guitarist and a bootlegger. He had been backed in the latter enterprise by a wealthy plantation owner from nearby Mechanicsburg, Dick Williams. But the political control Williams exercised over local police was to no avail when state revenue agents decided to raid his plantation still. When Williams got wind of their plans, he advised James to flee.

Eddie James hid out in Sidon, a Delta town that then numbered 390 residents. Later, he sent for his wife Phyllis and his young son, Nehemiah. But the marriage soon fell apart when his wife objected to the corporeal punishment he meted out to "Son" James, as their only child was called.

He quit the household with no possessions, but with better prospects than most blacks of his time and place. A high school degree set him apart from the adults his son would come to know around Sidon and Bentonina. As the latter would say: "Those people at the time I was comin' up was mostly illiterates...very few times could you find one of the parents with an education...Usually none of the parents did...If you had a high school degree, it was 'worth-while' (worth money)."

The educated Southern black could then realize the "worth" of his studies in two professions: teaching or the ministry. Somehow (his family was never party to the details), Eddie James opted for the pulpit. He soon became known as the Reverend E. D. James, the operator of a Texas seminary that turned out ministers.

The spirituals he sometimes composed and hawked to local congregations attested to his literacy, if not originality. Paragraphing the beginning of Whitman's *O Captain My Captain*, he derived a stanza for *Sea Walkin' Jesus*, his signature song. Citing every Biblical reference to water and immersion, he com-

piled an exhaustive dissertation entitled "Why I Am A Baptist," for which his colleagues had awarded him a Doctorate of Divinity.

His father knocked the minister unconscious...

Yet, beneath his veneer of aloof rectitude, E. D. James was a man of primitive anger. When another minister questioned one of his assertions at a theological conference, he retorted: "Are you calling me a liar?" When the man gave a nodding shrug in reply, James promptly knocked him unconscious.

As he drove through Bentonina in 1931, James had no intention of renewing his acquaintance with his twice-remarried former wife. When he took lodgings for the night it was with his sister, Martha Polk.

While conversing with Martha Polk he learned that his 28-year old son, who was boarding with other relatives a mile away, had become an extraordinary musician who had made records earlier that year.

A summons from his long-vanished father was relayed to Skippy James the next day. Guitar in hand, he arrived at his aunt's. The recital he had planned was designed to demonstrate a latent familial bond: Skippy had always believed that his musical gifts had been inherited from his father.

Yet, he had grown up feeling, as he put it, "like a forsaken child." He had only two fragmentary images of his father, both of them unpleasant. He recalled his father somberly kissing his mother goodbye and pocketing two boxes of wooden matches as he prepared to take to the woods to escape the police. In the other scene, "Son" James sat in his high chair, crying. He had just been struck by his father for throwing his fork across the dinner table. There were angry shouts between his parents...

It was partly owing to his lifelong sense of abandonment that his blues were desolate documents. He considered *Hard-Luck Child* "his song," a summation of his situation

in life.

*Been to the Nation, from there to the Territo'*

*And I'm a hard-luck child, catch the devil everywhere I go.*

But the verbal content of his songs was second to their ability to assault the senses. He conceived of blues as having the mesmeric effect of spirituals. Instead of uplifting listeners, it would stun them. "Why did I like blues?" he once asked. "Well, I'll tell you...The blues will take more effect than any other kind of music."

"Go back to church," his father said.

The blues James played took no "effect" on his father, who sat stolidly throughout his performance. At its conclusion he commented: "Son, that's nice and I liked it, but I'd like for you to reverse this thing. In other words, go back to the church."

This appeal left James unmoved. In neighboring villages like Flora and Pochantas he and a blues-singing companion named Henry Stuckey were already wont to represent themselves as sanctified singers. Sometimes he played piano at a local Baptist church. He performed spirituals for money, not inner satisfaction. Although he believed in the literal truth of the Bible, he rarely read it. He felt that he had no need of its morality: even as a backslider, he considered himself "one of the best men who ever walked."

Having failed to convert his son, the father all but lost interest in him. Soon, he left to continue his journey. As he drove through Jackson, however, he convinced himself that his son was a candidate for conversion. He returned to Bentonina and approached him with a new proposal: that he accompany the father to Dallas and attend the seminary he had founded.

"I'll think it over," James replied.

To soften his resistance, Reverend James added: "I can't blame you for singing blues; I've done all

that myself." This confession was no news to Skippy; while growing up he had heard numerous stories about his father's wayward days. "My daddy used to be somethin', man!" he would later recall. "Very 'skillful,' you understand?" James believed that he had inherited the same cleverness.

Yet for all his own cleverness, he was often embroiled in situations where his survival depended on his readiness to draw the Colt revolver he habitually carried. He regarded most of his neighbors as his enemies, and some of them were. Over the years he had developed a hysterical fear that his musical talent would lead to a violent death. "When I recorded for Paramount, I didn't care nothin' about nobody else playin' at that time," he later said. "...Well, quite naturally, that would cause enemies. 'Oh, Skip James, oh Skip James, they tell me Skip James has got to be famous...Boy, his fame has got mighty fast, too far. We gotta dip that guy.' See, *he* done had that fame, and then he think I'm gonna win it."

As 1931 drew to a close, he made his way from Bentonina to Arkansas. As he traveled in the Depression-ridden South, his father's offer began to weigh on him. In hopes of gaining a patron, a protector, and a father, he decided to give up blues-singing.

## FIVE

"I mighta wound up...in Hollywood."

"There's no tellin' where I mighta wound up if I hadn't come off this music business," he once said, remarking on his conversion. "In Hollywood, I reckon." Yet, by the time he had decided to forsake blues, James' recording career was already stalemated. Instead of the large initial pay-off he anticipated from Paramount, he received a check for 20 dollars after the company released his first record, *Hard Time Killin' Floor Blues*. When he cashed



it at a local country store owned by a man named D. C. Siegles, the proprietor told him that he was on his way to becoming a wealthy man. By the end of the year his wealth amounted to 60 dollars in royalty money.

The Depression only masked what would have been an inevitable failure on James' part. Though he traveled extensively in Mississippi in the 1920s, he had left no real mark beyond his home town. Johnnie Temple recalled that when he would sing *Devil Got My Woman* on the streets of Jackson, he sounded so sorrowful that spectators would pay him money to make him stop singing. Strife and sorrow had no entertainment value among audiences of his day.

Many blues singers paid lip-service to the notion that blues was unhappy music, the antithesis of the spirituals that were supposed to uplift the spirits of listeners. Their songs were replete with rhetorical references to "having the blues," which became almost obligatory when

blues became the popular music of blacks in the decade between 1910-1920. Yet most blues singers were simply hack entertainers. In Mississippi, the verbal content of most blues songs was superseded by a heavy dance beat that provided a livelihood for their performers, who entertained at rural "house frolics" (private parties organized by bootleggers as a means of selling their product) and "jukehouses" (commercially operated night-spots located in towns and cities). Even James respected this principal: his sorrowful *Hard Times* was played incongruously to a surging 1-2 beat. But the beat of his music was often secondary to its emotional content. His songs were expressions of his own bleak temperament. He was an aloof person who begrudged banter and mistrusted merriment. If blues had not existed in James' youth, he might have invented them.

"I was some kind of peculiar kid."



DRAFTON, Feb. 1931: "He sounded so sorrowful, spectators would pay him money to stop singing."

For as long as he could remember, Skip James was a loner. "I myself was some kind of peculiar kid, I guess," he would say. "I wanted to be by myself: if the conversation wasn't so that I could...get a little logic from it, it didn't interest me. I always wanted to do somethin' for myself, and just decided I wouldn't stop till I made some kind of mark in life." In music he generally shunned duet partners. "I never did want to play in no group or band or nothin'," he said. "I just wanna be me, Skip." For the most part he was too egotistical to work with other musicians: "If I get out in the deeps in the water," he explained, "I don't expect to have two paddles...I'd get out there and mess around with you, I be pullin' this side and you be pullin' that side...I ain't about to tote you: tote yourself. That fair? If I don't drift, I'll sink. An' if I should drift and make it ashore...I made the landin' for Skip."

To James, other musicians were opponents. Using the metaphor Booker T. Washington applied to his race, he likened blues musicians to a barrel of crabs. "Those crabs'll be crawlin' to try to reach the height of that barrel. An' the lead one will be nearly at the top. And those behind him are apt to grab him and put him back, 'cause he don't take them with him." Whenever he played, he had no intention of taking other musicians with him: he wanted to scale the top of the barrel by himself. The thought that another musician might duplicate his music was almost unendurable to him. The sight of a musician in his audience was a summons to James to alter his own playing. "If I figure he have caught the least idea about a song, when he come back the next night, it'll be so different that he can't understand it. Keep him graspin' at it all the time."

Listening to James rant about the barrel of crabs that represented the music world to him, one was tempted to think that music appealed to him because it reflected the alienation of a man in perpetual combat with the world. His music was the defiant product of an emotional hermit: "I wanted it different all the way—I always have had that intensity, to go contrary to the rest."

# SIX WHO MADE RECORDED HISTORY

(1926-1935)

by GAYLE DEAN WARDLOW



(JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI—October 20, 1935)





RICHMOND, IND.—JULY 29, 1929



DRAFTON, WIS.—MARCH, 1930

**J**OHNN BYRD—Byrd appeared in a variety of recording roles: as accompanist for Mae Glover for Gennett in 1929, as a sermonizer at the same session, as a recording partner of Washboard Walter for Paramount the following year, and as a self-accompanied blues singer at the same session. Although Delta bluesman Booker Miller likened Byrd's *Billy Goat Blues* to Delta guitar-playing, Byrd was apparently from south Mississippi. Ishmon Bracey thought he hailed from Redlick or Patterson, two towns in the vicinity of Natchez. ("Washboard Walter," was from Vicksburg, according to Bracey.) The Jackson bluesman Johnnie Temple twice saw Byrd perform locally with Tommy Johnson. "He's about my size," Temple said of him. "(a) kinda dark fella...he looked like he and Tommy were just about the same age." (Johnson was born around 1894.) Temple recalled that Byrd played his 12-string guitar with an unusual flatpick: "...He had a great big old pick, look like a toothpick, you know...He could play it, though." Byrd is also said to have visited Georgetown, Mississippi with Tommy Johnson and to have worked there in a sawmill for about a year. Another artist he performed with was Blind Roosevelt Graves: "I think they played together at Morton, Mississippi," Graves' one-time associate, Chester House, recalled.

**I**SAIAH NETTLES—Nettles' forceful brand of dance music was one of the few bright spots in a dismal blues recording era. Unfortunately, only two of the four sides he recorded for ARC were issued. His discoverer H.C. Speir located him at the train station in Rockport, a small settlement 20 miles southeast of Crystal Springs that consists of two stores. Although local residents proved unable to recall him when canvassed three decades later, it is probable that Nettles hailed from another town in the vicinity. A Jackson informant saw him perform both in Jackson and Hazelhurst, a town in the vicinity of Rockport. This informant recalled that Nettles

would enhance his musical appeal by tap-dancing in his bare feet as he played. (He also performed the strange stunt of spearing bottle-tops with his toes, and walking with the tops between them.)

Nettles appeared on an October, 1935 session supervised by Speir, Don Law, and W.R. Callaway, and held on the second floor of a building located near Speir's Farish Street music store. (Both Robert Wilk-

ins and Will Shade, who performed at the same session, had a vague memory of Nettles' presence there.) It is likely that the recording name "Mississippi Moaner" was given to Nettles by ARC recording director Art Satherley, for Speir did not recall it.

According to a Jackson source, Nettles served in the Second World War and spent two or three years afterwards in Mount Olive and

Tailorsville, two large towns in southeastern Mississippi. Then he left the area, remarking that he was headed "up North."

**S**ONNY SCOTT—A native of Alabama, Scott never achieved the popularity of his one-time associate Walter Roland, with whom he shared his first and last recording session in 1933. A singer named Gress Barnett knew Scott from the early 1930s, when he lived at Quitman, Mississippi. Scott, he said, was actually nicknamed "Scarborough," and was known both as "Sonny" Scarborough and as "Babe" Scarborough. For a time, Scott acted as Barnett's musical coach: "He tried to get me on piano chords on the guitar," Barnett said. "He could make a piano and a guitar say its prayers; he'd get on me a heap of times, he say 'You just stay around here, you oughta go about, you could be *learn't*—but you won't go nowhere.'" According to Barnett, he died shortly before World War II in Shubuta, where he had once lived and where his sister lived. "He had a so-called son, and the last time I seed his son, he said his daddy had passed," Barnett said.

**F**REDDIE SPRUELL—One of the first self-accompanied guitarists to record, Spruell lived in Chicago when he made his debut for Okeh Records in 1926. Although his musicianship had a decidedly Southern slant, it was apparently developed in the North. "Freddie was only a boy when he moved to Chicago with his parents," his widow recalled in 1981. Formerly, he had lived in Lake Providence, Louisiana, the one-time residence of Blind Joe Reynolds. "When I met him in the late '20s, he was already makin' records," she said. Apparently seeking to enlarge his reputation, he told her that he was the composer of *Mr. Freddie Blues*, which was originally recorded by Priscilla Stewart in the summer of 1924, and credited to her piano-playing accompanist, who later recorded as Freddie Shayne.

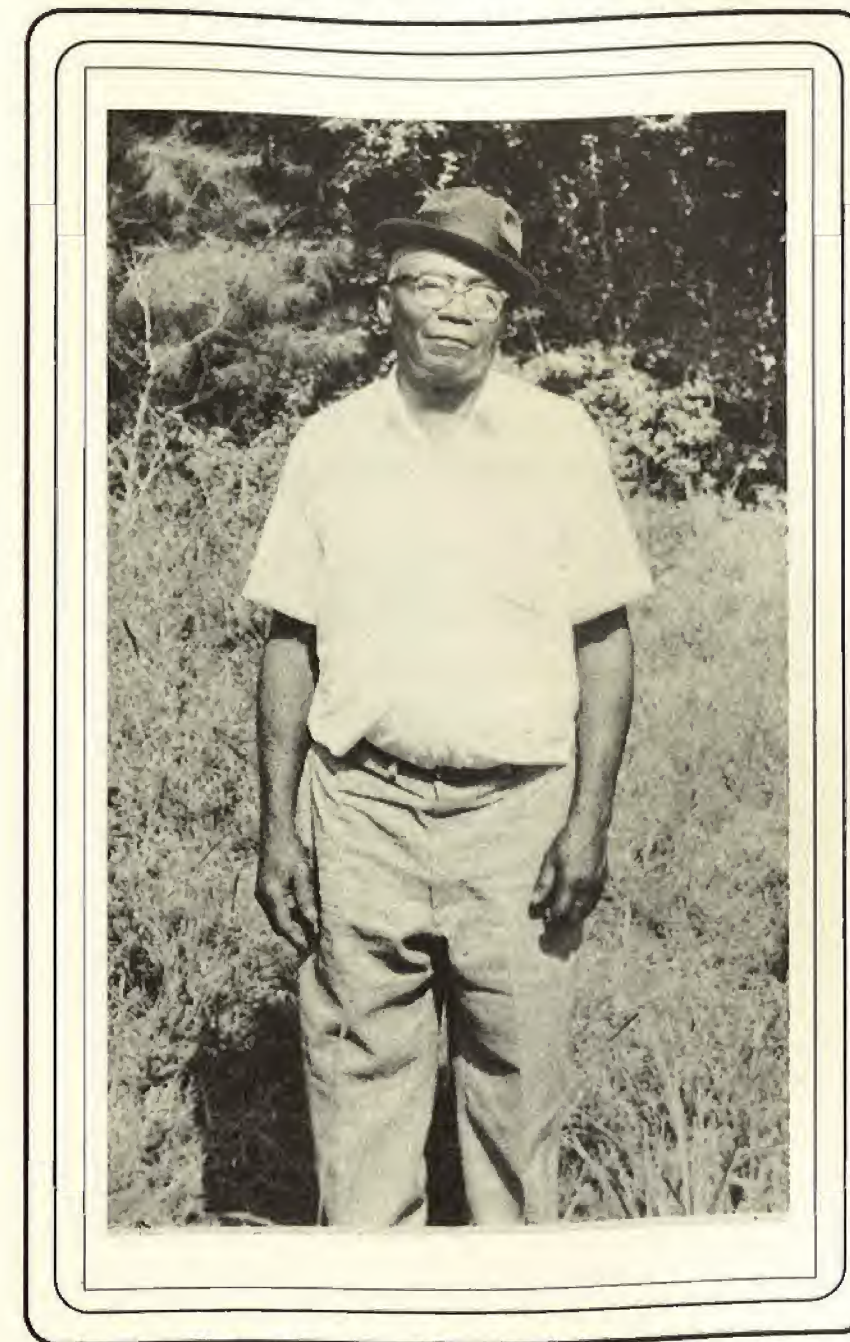


photo by GAYLE DEAN WARDLOW

GRESS BARNETT FROM QUITMAN, MISSISSIPPI





from the collection of GAYLE DEAN WARDLOW

CHICAGO—JUNE 25, 1926

**G**EESHIE WILEY—The four tunes that Wiley recorded for Paramount in 1930 and 1931 establish her as one of the greatest female blues artists. According to Ishmon Bracey, she hailed from the vicinity of Natchez. In the 1920s she spent three months in Jackson as a resident of John Hart Street; while there, she played in a medicine show. "She could play a guitar, but she had a guitar-player with her," Bracey said. "...She'd play a guitar, and a ukelele, too." While in Jackson, she took up with Charlie McCoy.

Spruell's secular musical career ended by the end of World War II: "The last thing he played for I knew about, was his mother's birthday...She asked him to stop playin' (blues), and he did it after that. She wanted him to go back into the church, and he did. That's why he quit playing the blues and started preaching." She added: "He was preaching by 1945. He was a Baptist...But he didn't preach that much and didn't play in church." Spruell, she said, died in 1956 after a lengthy hospital stay. "He died in Chicago," she said. Yet, no local death certificate for Spruell appears to exist.

**E**LVIE THOMAS—A woman matching the description of Elvie Thomas (who, in March, 1930, made two titles for Paramount) was remembered living near Palmer's Crossing, a small community outside of Hattiesburg. No other information is available.



photo courtesy of GAYLE DEAN WARDLOW

ISHMON BRACEY IN THE 1920s





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